MORE PAGES OF STORIES

A FAWCETT PUBLICATION

JULY NO. 42

LASH LaRUE WESTERN

10¢

In this issue: Ticket to DESPAIR! Starring THE KING OF THE BULLWHIP!

SELF DEFENSE

By R. R. Symes

SHERIFF BARNEY DANCER pushed open the swinging doors of The Red Diamond Casino and strode inside. The star on his vest sparked silver in the glint of the big, overhead oil lamps.

Some of the cowpunchers, lounging away an idle hour in the place, looked up and grinned, with a "Howdy, Sheriff!" or "Hi ya, Barney?" Some of the other men glanced at the lawman quickly, then turned away.

"Where's Graham?" The sheriff's clipped question was addressed to Sam, the bartender.

"In back," said Sam, nodding toward a rear door.

Sheriff Dancer threaded his way between tables to the door on which was lettered "Private Office." He knocked, at the same time saying, "Graham, I want to talk to you."

"Come in, Sheriff. The door's unlocked." The voice was oily in its mock welcome.

Graham, a swarthy man with slick black hair and a waxed mustache, was seated behind his desk. He did not rise or offer to shake hands as the lawman entered. "Sit down, Sheriff," he suggested. "What can I do for you?"

"Tell me where I can find the Canyon Kid."

"Well, now, I'm not sure I can help you, Sheriff. What's he wanted for?"

"Murder!"

Graham sat back in his chair and pressed the tips of his fingers together. It was several seconds before he spoke. "That's a harsh word, Sheriff. It's possible the Canyon Kid did kill someone, I won't argue about that. But if he did, it must have been in self-defense."

"Self-defense!" Barney Dancer put great sarcasm into the two words. "The Kid shot Will Plumber *in the back.*"

Graham was no longer smiling. "Let's not misunderstand each other, Sheriff. The Canyon Kid is one of my employes. He's a valuable man and I don't want anything to happen to him. Now when I tell you he did the shooting in self-defense, that's exactly what he did. It's no concern of the law. I don't want him bothered by you or any of your tin badge deputies. Get me?"

Sheriff Barney Dancer rose slowly. His jaw was set, his face almost expressionless. With great difficulty he masked the seething, burning anger within himself.

As he opened the door he said, "You're the boss," and walked out. Graham watched his departing figure and smiled with satisfaction.

Soon afterward, the lawman was in the office of Mayor Caldwell. He wasted no time on preliminaries. "Mr. Mayor, Graham tells me I'm to keep my hands off that murderer, the Canyon Kid."

Mayor Caldwell, a fat man with a double chin, did not face the sheriff but pretended to be busy lighting a cigar as he replied, "Well, Barney, it never pays to be too hasty, does it? Now we've got witnesses that say the Canyon Kid did that shooting in self-defense. So the matter is no concern of the law at all. You just forget about it and everything will work out all right. Have a cigar."

Barney Dancer ignored the stogie. As he spoke, his hands were working at something on his chest. "A month ago you sent for me, Mr. Mayor, to come to this town and maintain law and order. You said you needed a strong man and a sure shot. You said the bad element had to be kept in line. I see now that was all window dressing. You wanted a play-acting sheriff to keep the good citizens from rising up in arms. You are the bad element yourself, Mr. Mayor. You and your *boss,* Graham! Here!"

(Continued on inside back cover)

LASH LaRUE WESTERN • Executive Editor WILL LIEBERSON • Editor V. A. PROVISIERO

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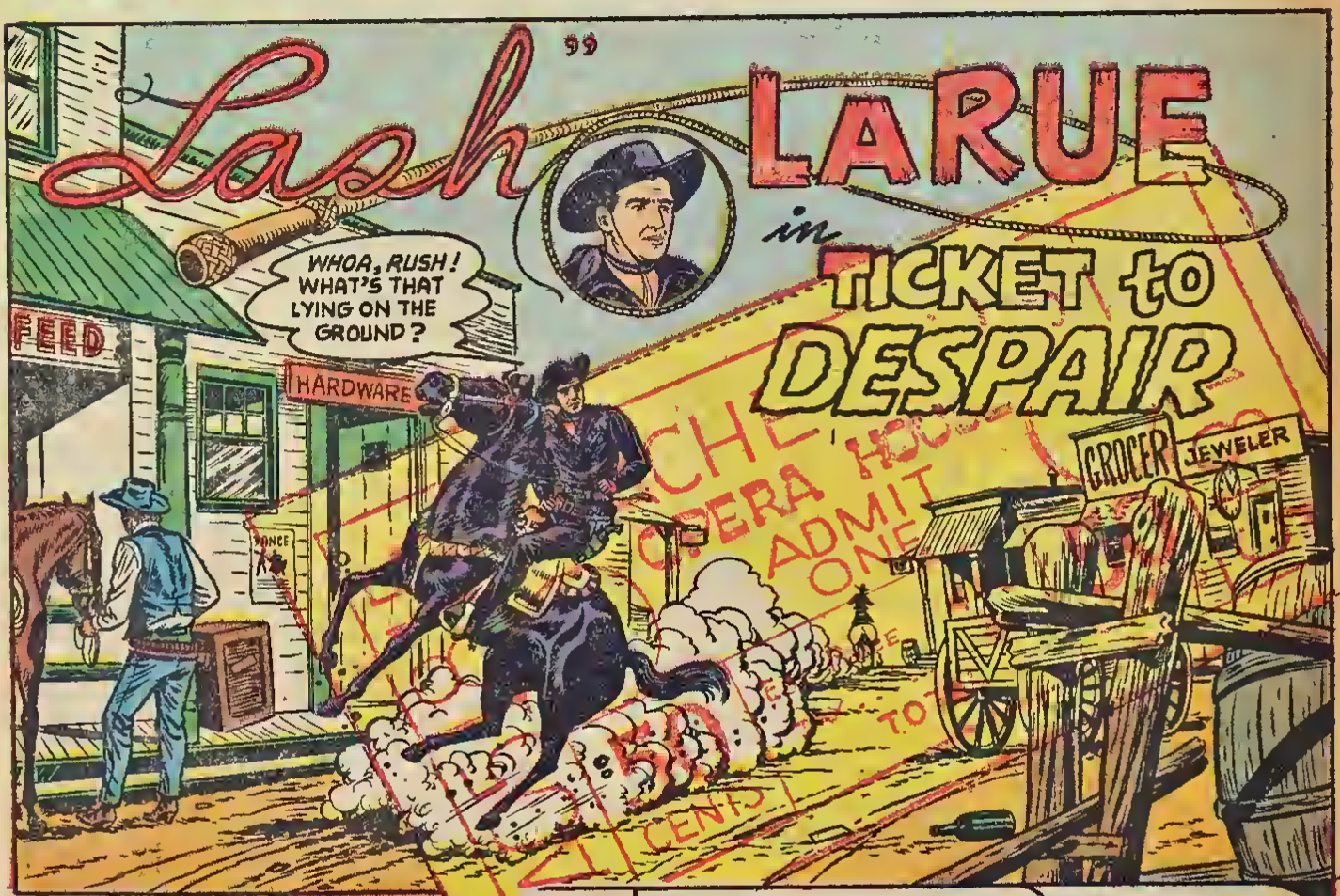
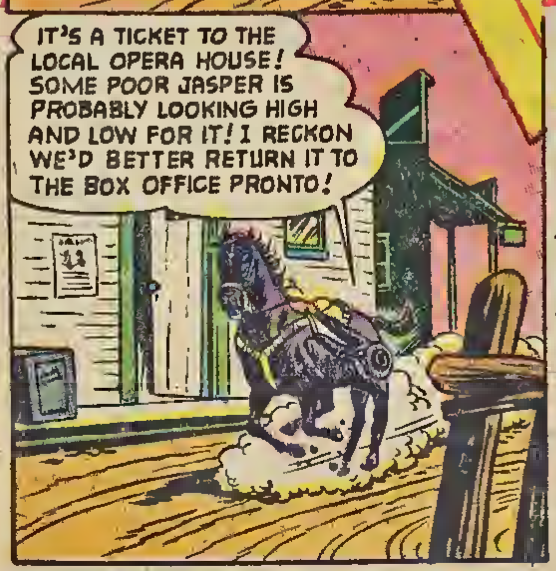
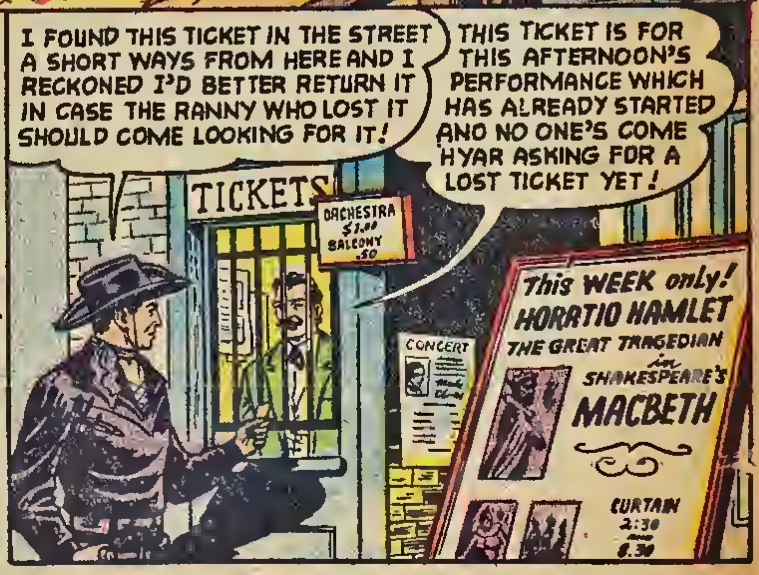
W. H. Fawcett, Jr. President

Lash LaRUE in TICKET to DESPAIR





AT THE BOX OFFICE OF THE APACHE FALLS OPERA HOUSE...



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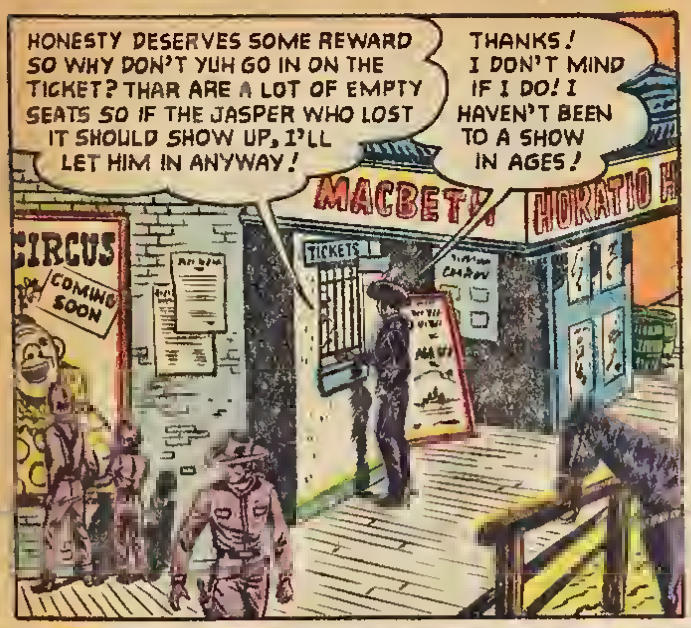
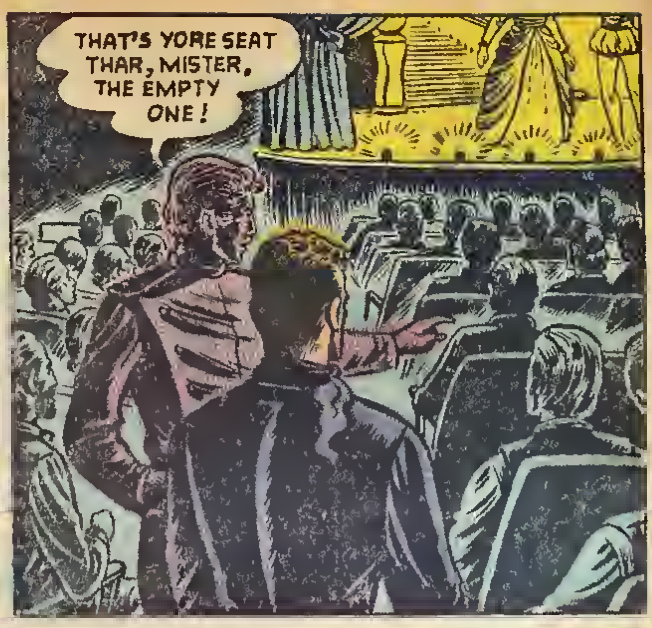
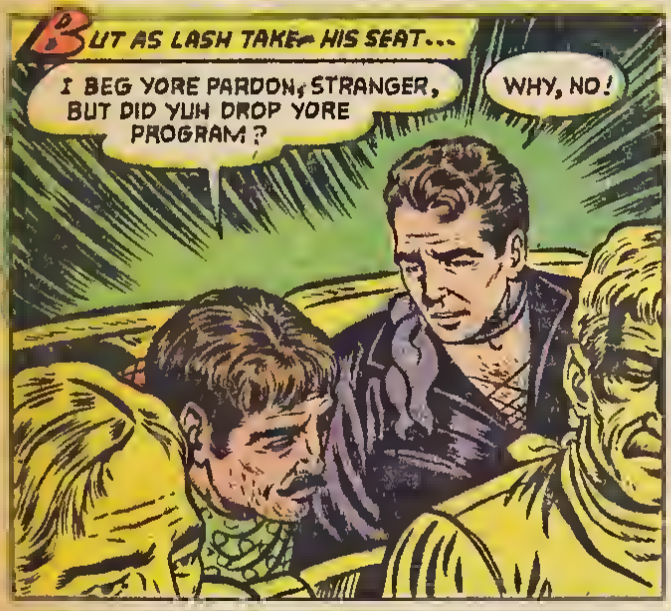

HONESTY DESERVES SOME REWARD SO WHY DON'T YUH GO IN ON THE TICKET? THAR ARE A LOT OF EMPTY SEATS SO IF THE JASPER WHO LOST IT SHOULD SHOW UP, I'LL LET HIM IN ANYWAY!
THANKS! I DON'T MIND IF I DO! I HAVEN'T BEEN TO A SHOW IN AGES!
MACBETH
HORATIO H
CIRCUS
COMING SOON
TICKETS


THAT'S YORE SEAT THAR, MISTER, THE EMPTY ONE!


BUT AS LASH TAKES HIS SEAT...
I BEG YORE PARDON, STRANGER, BUT DID YUH DROP YORE PROGRAM?
WHY, NO!

P-S-S-ST! HYAR'S THE NOTE! DON'T READ IT HYAR AND MAKE SURE NO ONE SEES YUH TALKING TO ME! NO ONE MUST SUSPECT WE KNOW EACH OTHER!
HUH?

THIS HOMBRE HAS MISTAKEN ME FOR SOMEDNE ELSE, BUT THE TONE WITH WHICH HE ADDRESSED ME MAKES WHATEVER HE'S DOING SOUND OMINOUS!

I RECKON I'D BETTER PLAY ALONG UNTIL I'M SURE THERE'S NOTHING ILLEGAL GOING ON!

AND WHEN INTERMISSION COMES...

NOW TO FIND SOME CORNER IN THE LOBBY WHERE I CAN READ THIS NOTE!

Thanks for showing up! As you can understand I didn't dare put the following information in the letter I wrote you for fear that if it went astray and fell into the wrong hands, it would be bad for both of us! The five thousand dollars I wrote could be yours can be if you kill the publisher, Baro Presston! Naturally, no one must suspect any connection between us! How you kill Presston is up to you, but the day after you kill him either I or the messenger who delivered this note to you will meet you in the lobby of the same opera house and will slip you a package with the five thousand dolla in it! As soon as you get the money, you are to leave town immediately! Good luck!

DID I SAY IT SOUNDED OMINOUS? THAT HOMBRE SITTING NEXT TO ME MISTOOK ME FOR SOME HIRED KILLER! I'D BETTER NAB HIM AND FIND OUT WHO IS BEHIND ALL THIS AND WHO THE HIRED KILLER IS, TOO!

HE'S GONE---UNLESS HE JUST STEPPED OUTSIDE FOR THE INTERMISSION!

BUT AS THE PLAY GOES ON...

HE'S GONE ALL RIGHT! I RECKON I'D BETTER SEE THE PUBLISHER MENTIONED IN THE NOTE--- BARO PRESSTON!

EXIT

WHAT'S THE MATTER? DION'T YUH LIKE THE SHOW?

IT WAS MIGHTY FINE, BUT-- ER--I JUST REMEMBERED A CHORE I FORGOT TO DO!

ORCHESTRA $1.00 BALCONY .50

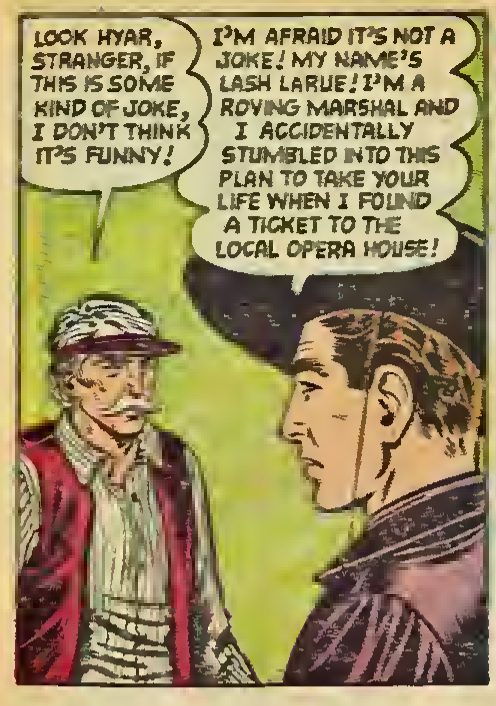
MACBETH

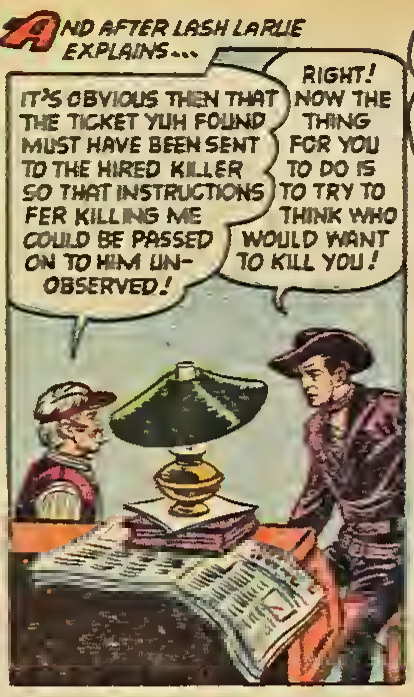
This WEEK only! HORATIO HAMLET THE GREAT TRAG

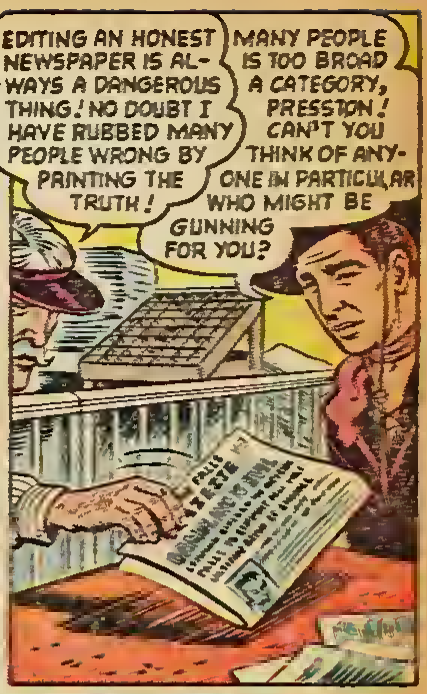
MEANWHILE, AT THE APACHE FALLS HOTEL --- ROOM 101...

WHAT IN TARNATION COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THAT TICKET? IF I OON'T FIND IT SOON, THE PERFORMANCE WILL BE OVER! AND THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE ONLY WAY I COULD RECEIVE INSTRUCTIONS TELLING ME HOW I COULD EARN AN EASY FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS!

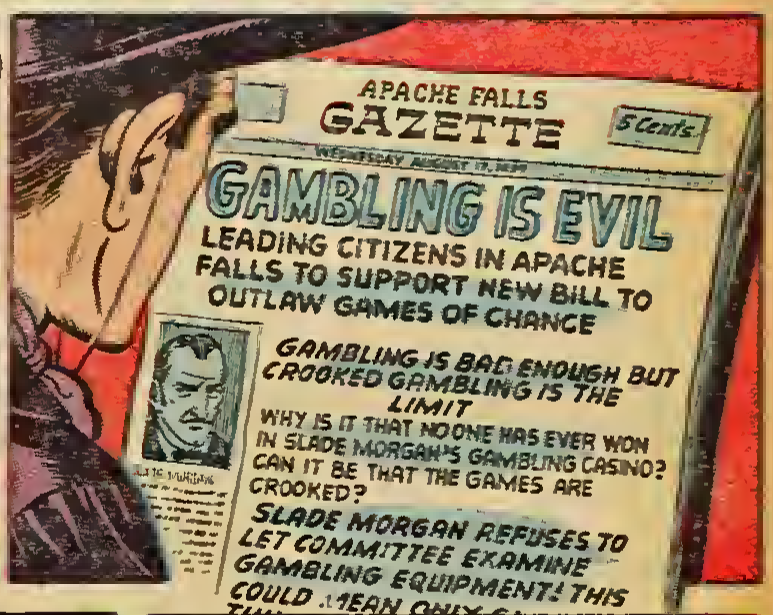
I'LL LOOK THIS ROOM OVER ONCE MORE!
#!*!#*
WHAM!
AT THE SAME TIME...
WHOA, RUSH! THIS IS THE PLACE WE'RE LOOKING FOR! THERE'S BARD PRESSTON'S NAME RIGHT ON THE WINDOW!
APACHE FALLS GAZETTE
OFFICE
APACHE FALLS GAMBLING CASINO AND SALOON
APACHE FALLS GAZETTE
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER BARD PRESSTON
YES, SIR?
I'D LIKE TO SEE THE PUBLISHER, BARD PRESSTON!
GAZETTE
THAT'S MY NAME! WHAT CAN I DO FER YUH?
RIGHT NOW IT'S MORE TO THE POINT TO ASK WHAT I CAN DO FOR YOU!
WHAT ARE YUH TALKING ABOUT--- WHAT YUH CAN DO FER ME? IN WHAT WAY?
I HOPE TO KEEP YOU FROM GETTING MURDERED!
(GULP!)

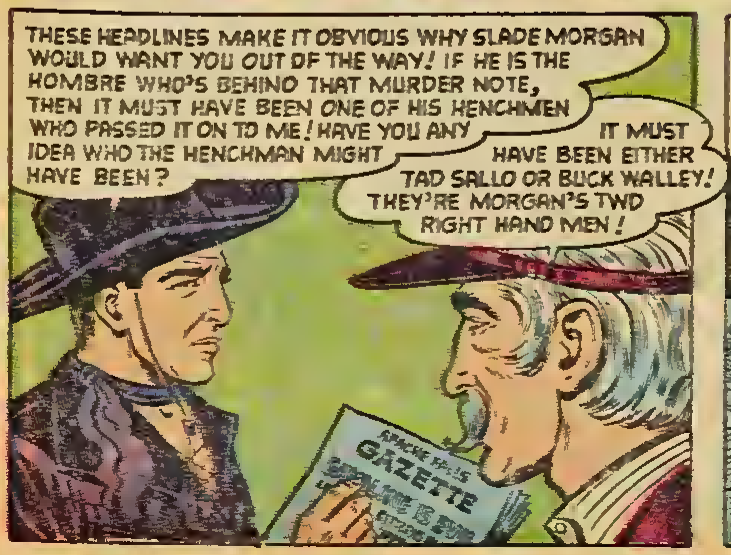

LOOK HYAR, STRANGER, IF THIS IS SOME KIND OF JOKE, I DON'T THINK IT'S FUNNY!
I'M AFRAID IT'S NOT A JOKE! MY NAME'S LASH LARUE! I'M A ROVING MARSHAL AND I ACCIDENTALLY STUMBLED INTO THIS PLAN TO TAKE YOUR LIFE WHEN I FOUND A TICKET TO THE LOCAL OPERA HOUSE!

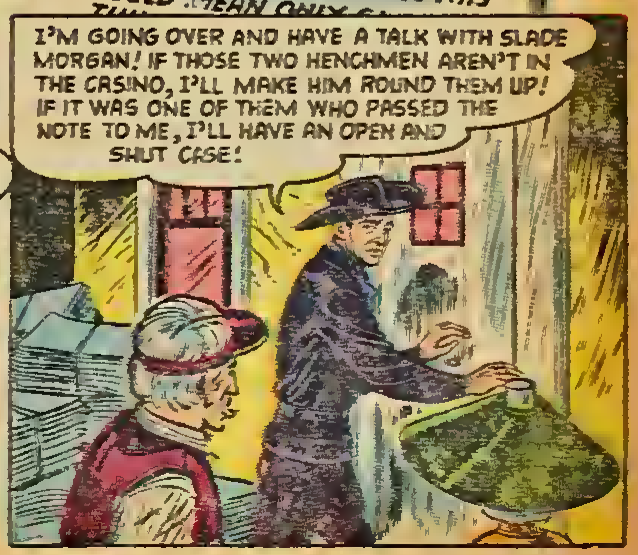

AND AFTER LASH LARUE EXPLAINS...
IT'S OBVIOUS THEN THAT THE TICKET YUH FOUND MUST HAVE BEEN SENT TO THE HIRED KILLER SO THAT INSTRUCTIONS FER KILLING ME COULD BE PASSED ON TO HIM UNOBSERVED!
RIGHT! NOW THE THING FOR YOU TO DO IS TO TRY TO THINK WHO WOULD WANT TO KILL YOU!

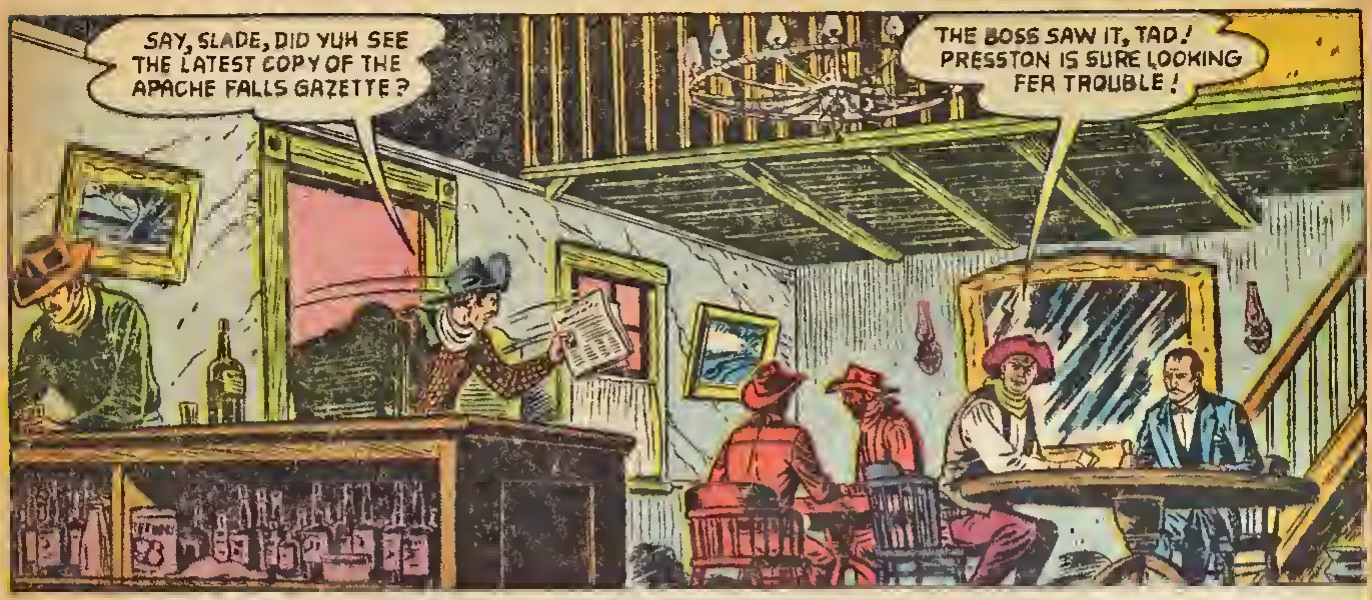

EDITING AN HONEST NEWSPAPER IS ALWAYS A DANGEROUS THING! NO DOUBT I HAVE RUBBED MANY PEOPLE WRONG BY PRINTING THE TRUTH!
MANY PEOPLE IS TOO BROAD A CATEGORY, PRESSTON! CAN'T YOU THINK OF ANYONE IN PARTICULAR WHO MIGHT BE GUNNING FOR YOU?

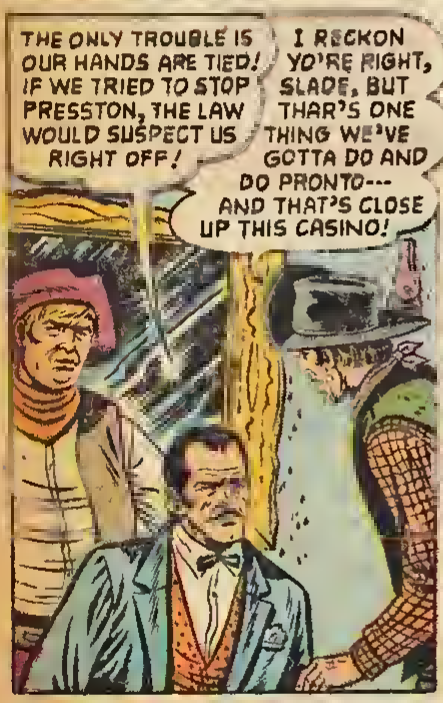
I HATE TO MAKE ANY WILD ACCUSATIONS, LARUE, BUT I HAVE BEEN RUNNING A CAMPAIGN AGAINST SLADE MORGAN'S GAMBLING CASINO WHICH IS RIGHT ACROSS THE WAY! HYAR, YUH CAN SEE FER YORESELF!


APACHE FALLS GAZETTE
5 Cents
GAMBLING IS EVIL
LEADING CITIZENS IN APACHE FALLS TO SUPPORT NEW BILL TO OUTLAW GAMES OF CHANCE
GAMBLING IS BAD ENOUGH BUT CROOKED GAMBLING IS THE LIMIT
WHY IS IT THAT NO ONE HAS EVER WON IN SLADE MORGAN'S GAMBLING CASINO? CAN IT BE THAT THE GAMES ARE CROOKED?
SLADE MORGAN REFUSES TO LET COMMITTEE EXAMINE GAMBLING EQUIPMENT! THIS


THESE HEADLINES MAKE IT OBVIOUS WHY SLADE MORGAN WOULD WANT YOU OUT OF THE WAY! IF HE IS THE HOMBRE WHO'S BEHIND THAT MURDER NOTE, THEN IT MUST HAVE BEEN ONE OF HIS HENCHMEN WHO PASSED IT ON TO ME! HAVE YOU ANY IDEA WHO THE HENCHMAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN?
IT MUST HAVE BEEN EITHER TAD SALLO OR BUCK WALLEY! THEY'RE MORGAN'S TWO RIGHT HAND MEN!
APACHE FALLS GAZETTE

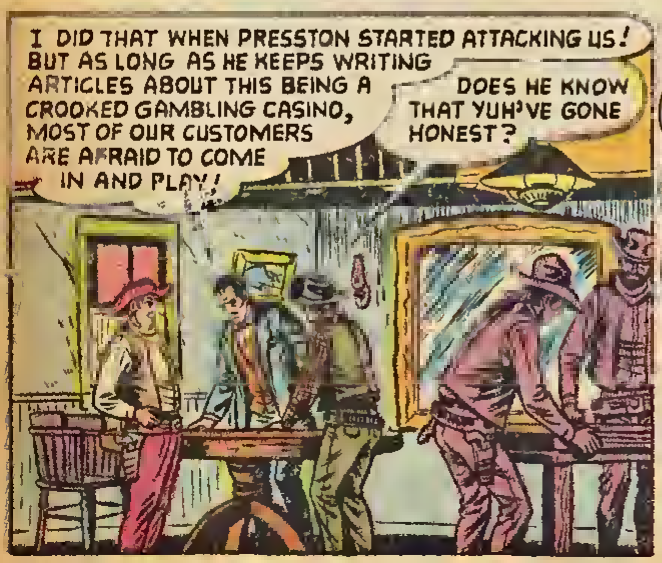

I'M GOING OVER AND HAVE A TALK WITH SLADE MORGAN! IF THOSE TWO HENCHMEN AREN'T IN THE CASINO, I'LL MAKE HIM ROUND THEM UP! IF IT WAS ONE OF THEM WHO PASSED THE NOTE TO ME, I'LL HAVE AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE!

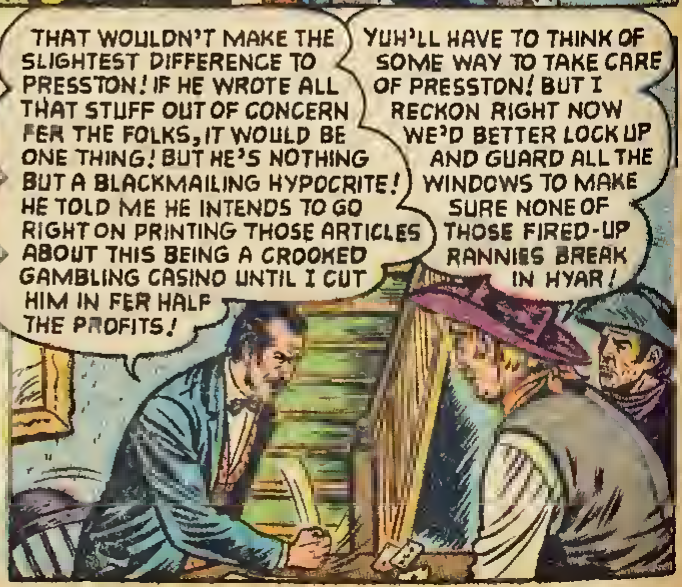

SAY, SLADE, DID YUH SEE THE LATEST COPY OF THE APACHE FALLS GAZETTE?
THE BOSS SAW IT, TAD! PRESSTON IS SURE LOOKING FER TROUBLE!


THE ONLY TROUBLE IS OUR HANDS ARE TIED! IF WE TRIED TO STOP PRESSTON, THE LAW WOULD SUSPECT US RIGHT OFF!
I RECKON YO'RE RIGHT, SLADE, BUT THAR'S ONE THING WE'VE GOTTA DO AND DO PRONTO--- AND THAT'S CLOSE UP THIS CASINO!

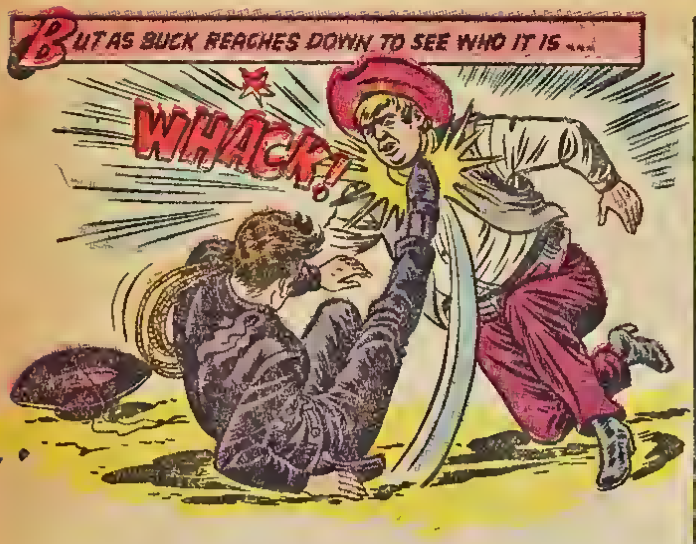
WHAT ARE YUH TALKING ABOUT, TAD?
SOME OF THOSE HOMBRES WE FLEECED WHILE PLAYING HYAR HAVE BEEN READING THE LATEST COPY OF THE PAPER AND THEY'RE SO RILED UP, THEY ROUNDED UP A MOB AND ARE ON THEIR WAY HYAR TO RIP UP THE JOINT!

QUICK, GET THOSE FEW CUSTOMERS OUT OF HYAR AND LOCK UP THE PLACE! WE'VE GOT A FORTUNE IN EQUIPMENT HYAR! WE CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE IT BROKEN UP!
I SUGGEST WE REMOVE ALL THE CROOKED WHEELS AND MARKED CARDS WHILE WE'RE AT IT, TOO!


I DID THAT WHEN PRESSTON STARTED ATTACKING US! BUT AS LONG AS HE KEEPS WRITING ARTICLES ABOUT THIS BEING A CROOKED GAMBLING CASINO, MOST OF OUR CUSTOMERS ARE AFRAID TO COME IN AND PLAY!
DOES HE KNOW THAT YUH'VE GONE HONEST?


THAT WOULDN'T MAKE THE SLIGHTEST DIFFERENCE TO PRESSTON! IF HE WROTE ALL THAT STUFF OUT OF CONCERN FER THE FOLKS, IT WOULD BE ONE THING! BUT HE'S NOTHING BUT A BLACKMAILING HYPOCRITE! HE TOLD ME HE INTENDS TO GO RIGHT ON PRINTING THOSE ARTICLES ABOUT THIS BEING A CROOKED GAMBLING CASINO UNTIL I CUT HIM IN FER HALF THE PROFITS!
YUH'LL HAVE TO THINK OF SOME WAY TO TAKE CARE OF PRESSTON! BUT I RECKON RIGHT NOW WE'D BETTER LOCK UP AND GUARD ALL THE WINDOWS TO MAKE SURE NONE OF THOSE FIRED-UP RANNIES BREAK IN HYAR!

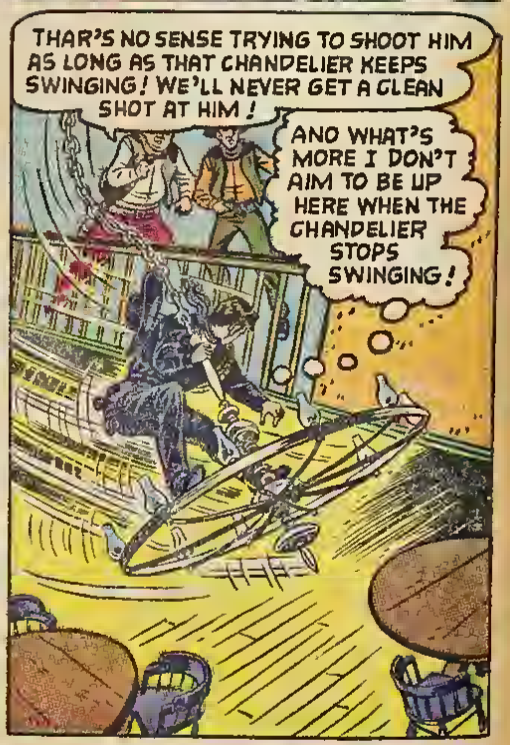
AND AS LASH LARUE CROSSES THE STREET FROM THE GAZETTE OFFICE TO THE GAMBLING CASINO...
THIS IS MIGHTY ODD! WHOEVER HEARD OF LOCKING UP A GAMBLING CASINO AT THIS TIME OF DAY!
APACHE FALLS GAMBLING CASINO AND SALOON
KNOCK! KNOCK!
NO ANSWER! BUT I CAN HEAR SOMEONE MOVING AROUND IN THERE!
KNOCK! KNOCK!
SALOON
THERE'S AN OPEN WINDOW UP THERE!
SNAP!
IF THAT RAINPIPE IS STURDY, THIS SHOULD BE EASY!
AS SOON AS I UNHOOK THE WHIP, IT SHOULD BE AN EASY LEAP FROM HERE TO THE WINDOW!
BUT AS THE ROVING MARSHAL CLIMBS THROUGH...
I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMEONE OUTSIDE!
CONK!
WHO IS IT, BUCK?

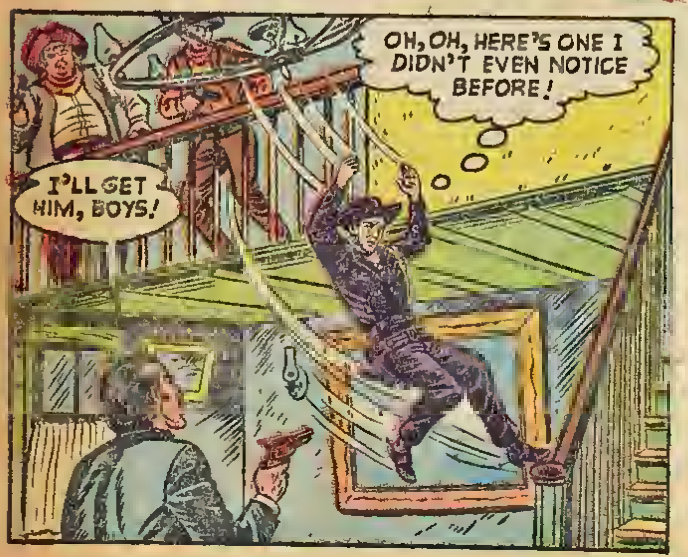

BUT AS BUCK REACHES DOWN TO SEE WHO IT IS ...
WHACK!

(GROAN!) I NEVER SAW HIM BEFORE!
HE MUST BE ONEOF THOSE TROUBLE-MAKING JASPERS! C'MON, LET'S GET HIM!

THAR'S NO PLACE TO GO WHEN HE REACHES THE END OF THIS HALLWAY! WE'LL HAVE HIM CORNERED!
SINCE THERE'S NO TIME FOR EXPLANATIONS AND I DON'T AIM TO ENGAGE IN A GUN FIGHT WITH POSSIBLY INNOCENT MEN, I RECKON I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE SURE THEY DON'T CORNER ME!

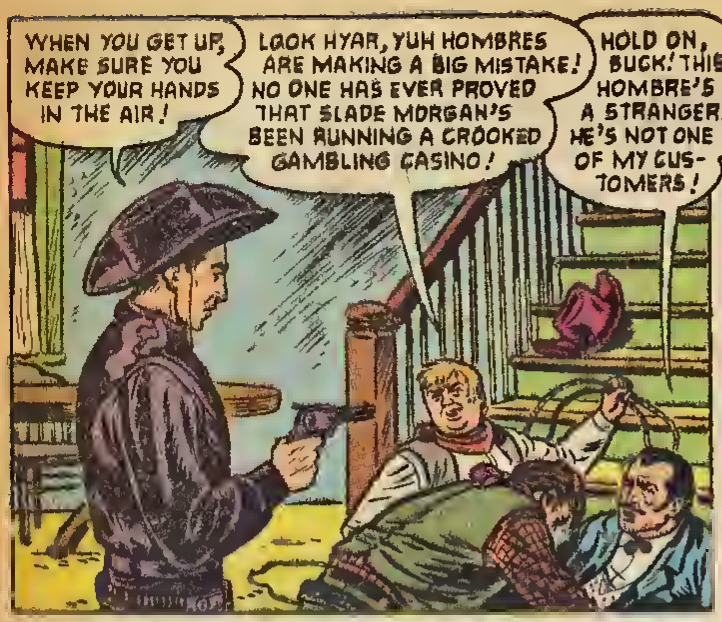
AND THIS IS THE ONLY WAY I CAN THINK OF DOING THAT!


THAR'S NO SENSE TRYING TO SHOOT HIM AS LONG AS THAT CHANDELIER KEEPS SWINGING! WE'LL NEVER GET A CLEAN SHOT AT HIM!
AND WHAT'S MORE I DON'T AIM TO BE UP HERE WHEN THE CHANDELIER STOPS SWINGING!

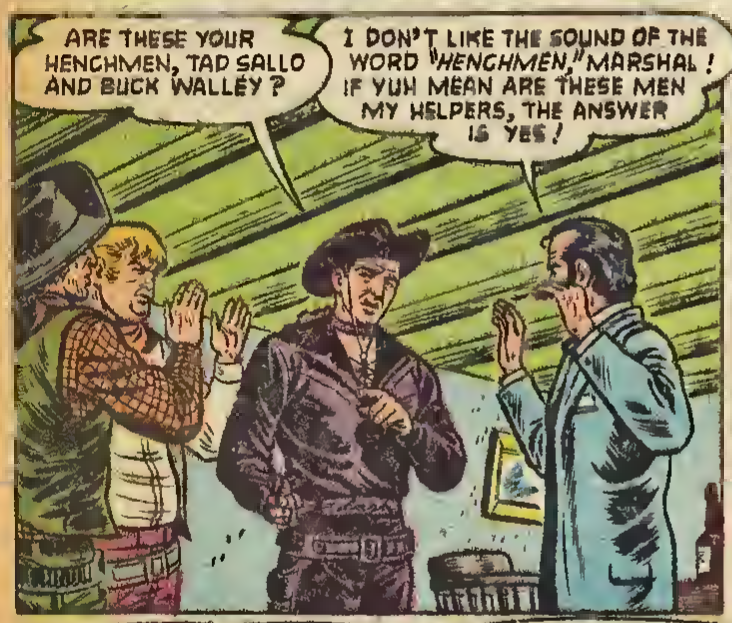

OH, OH, HERE'S ONE I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE BEFORE!
I'LL GET HIM, BOYS!

YUH MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP, STRANGER! WE'VE GOT YUH SURROUNDED!

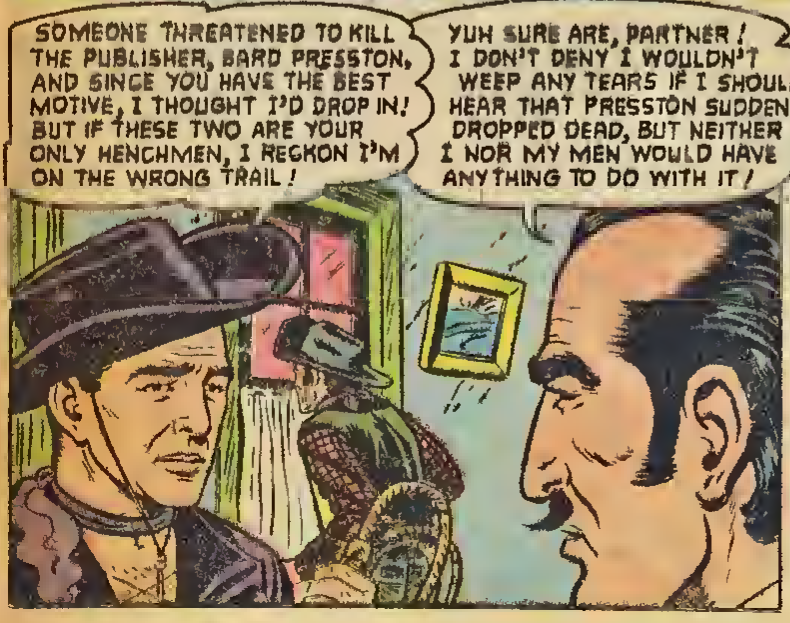
BUT "GIVE UP" ARE WORDS NO MARSHAL HAS EVER LEARNED!
SNAP!
HEY!
WHAT THE---
NOW FOR A NICE STRONG YANK!
WHAM!
BAM!


WHEN YOU GET UP, MAKE SURE YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS IN THE AIR!
LOOK HYAR, YUH HOMBRES ARE MAKING A BIG MISTAKE! NO ONE HAS EVER PROVED THAT SLADE MORGAN'S BEEN RUNNING A CROOKED GAMBLING CASINO!
HOLD ON, BUCK! THIS HOMBRE'S A STRANGER! HE'S NOT ONE OF MY CUSTOMERS!

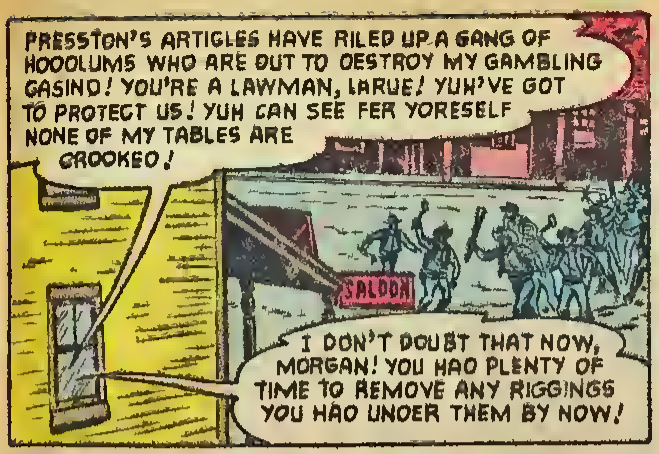
I'M NOT HERE ABOUT CROOKED GAMBLING! MY NAME'S LASH LARUE!
LASH LARUE! OH, OH, THE ROVING MARSHAL!

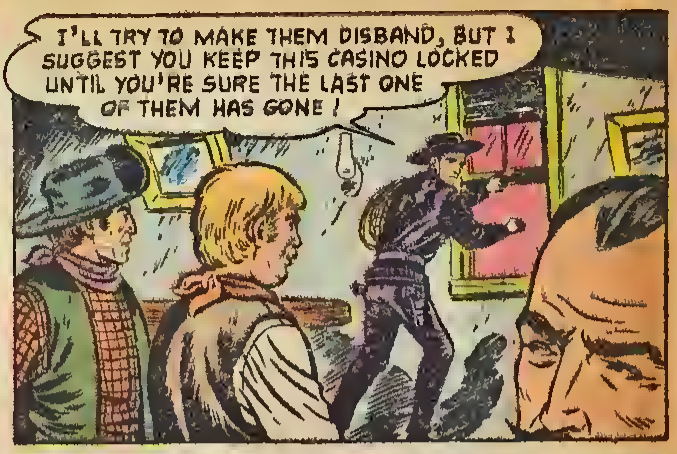

ARE THESE YOUR HENCHMEN, TAD SALLO AND BUCK WALLEY?
I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THE WORD "HENCHMEN," MARSHAL! IF YUH MEAN ARE THESE MEN MY HELPERS, THE ANSWER IS YES!

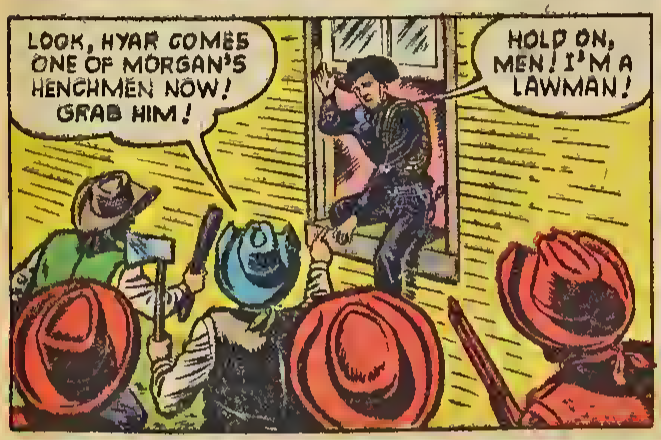
DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER HELPERS BESIDES THESE TWO?
ONLY THESE TWO, BUT IF YUH DON'T MIND, I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHY YUH ASK THAT QUESTION!


SOMEONE THREATENED TO KILL THE PUBLISHER, BARD PRESSTON, AND SINCE YOU HAVE THE BEST MOTIVE, I THOUGHT I'D DROP IN! BUT IF THESE TWO ARE YOUR ONLY HENCHMEN, I RECKON I'M ON THE WRONG TRAIL!
YUH SURE ARE, PARTNER! I DON'T DENY I WOULDN'T WEEP ANY TEARS IF I SHOULD HEAR THAT PRESSTON SUDDENLY DROPPED DEAD, BUT NEITHER I NOR MY MEN WOULD HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT!

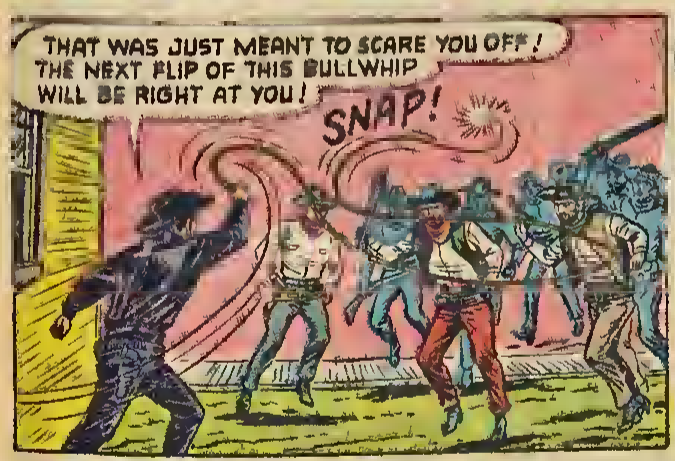
HYAR THEY COME!
HERE WHO COMES?

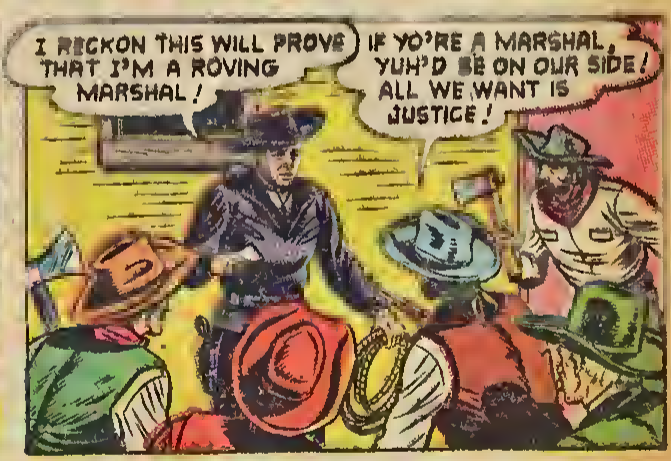

PRESSTON'S ARTICLES HAVE RILED UP A GANG OF HOODLUMS WHO ARE OUT TO DESTROY MY GAMBLING CASINO! YOU'RE A LAWMAN, LARUE! YUH'VE GOT TO PROTECT US! YUH CAN SEE FER YORESELF NONE OF MY TABLES ARE CROOKED!
SALOON
I DON'T DOUBT THAT NOW, MORGAN! YOU HAD PLENTY OF TIME TO REMOVE ANY RIGGINGS YOU HAD UNDER THEM BY NOW!

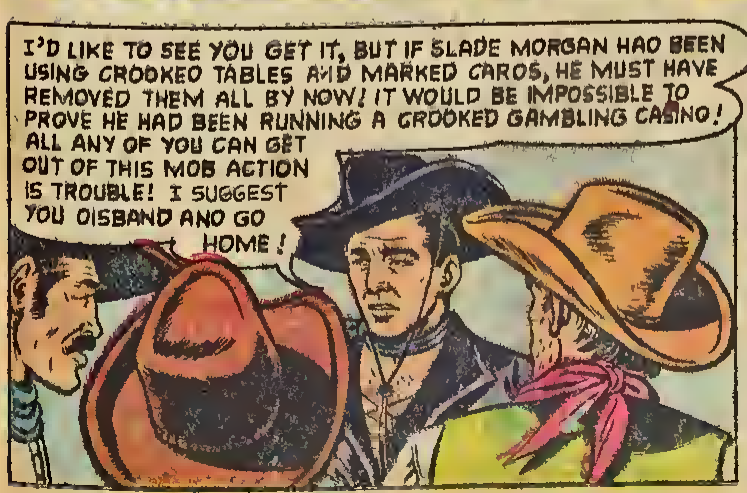

I'LL TRY TO MAKE THEM DISBAND, BUT I SUGGEST YOU KEEP THIS CASINO LOCKED UNTIL YOU'RE SURE THE LAST ONE OF THEM HAS GONE!


LOOK, HYAR COMES ONE OF MORGAN'S HENCHMEN NOW! GRAB HIM!
HOLD ON, MEN! I'M A LAWMAN!

THAT'S A GOOD ONE! A LAWMAN COMING OUT OF A CROOKED GAMBLING CASINO! LET'S GET HIM!


THAT WAS JUST MEANT TO SCARE YOU OFF! THE NEXT FLIP OF THIS BULLWHIP WILL BE RIGHT AT YOU!
SNAP!


I RECKON THIS WILL PROVE THAT I'M A ROVING MARSHAL!
IF YO'RE A MARSHAL, YUH'D BE ON OUR SIDE! ALL WE WANT IS JUSTICE!


I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU GET IT, BUT IF SLADE MORGAN HAD BEEN USING CROOKED TABLES AND MARKED CARDS, HE MUST HAVE REMOVED THEM ALL BY NOW! IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVE HE HAD BEEN RUNNING A CROOKED GAMBLING CASINO! ALL ANY OF YOU CAN GET OUT OF THIS MOB ACTION IS TROUBLE! I SUGGEST YOU DISBAND AND GO HOME!

I'M TOO BUSY TO WAIT UNTIL THE LAST ONE OF YOU MOVES ON, BUT I DON'T WANT TO FIND A SINGLE ONE OF YOU HERE WHEN I GET BACK!

IF SLADE MORGAN'S NOT BEHIND THAT MURDER NOTE, THEN WHO IS? I RECKON I'D BETTER GO AND HAVE ANOTHER TALK WITH PRESSTON!
APACHE FALLS GAZETTE
MEANWHILE, AT THE DOUBLE XX RANCH...
CUDD DIXON! WHAT ARE YUH DOING HYAR? I THOUGHT I MADE IT CLEAR IN MY LETTER TO YUH THAT YUH WEREN'T TO COME ARDUND HYAR AT ALL!
DON'T WORRY, HADDEES! NO ONE SAW ME RIDING UP HYAR!
DOUBLE XX RANCH
I HAD TO COME! YUH SEE I LOST THAT DANGBLASTED OPRY HOUSE TICKET YUH SENT ME, AND I COULDN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER WAY TO FIND OUT WHAT I HAVE TO DO TO EARN THAT FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS!
MY HELPER, CLEM HOPPER, MUST BE WONDERING WHAT HAPPENED TO YUH! HE HAD THE SEAT NEXT TO YUH IN THE THEATRE AND WAS SUPPOSED TO WAIT THAR UNTIL YUH SHOWED UP TO GIVE YUH THE NOTE! WE'D BETTER GO INSIDE WHAR WE CAN TALK!
I WANT YUH TO KILL THE PUBLISHER, BARD PRESSTON!
WHY?
THAT'S NO CONCERN OF YOURS, CUDD DIXON! AS I WROTE TO YUH IN THE NOTE, THAR'S FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS IN IT FER YUH!
WHAR DO I FIND THIS NEWSPAPER HOMBRE?
YUH CAN'T MISS THE PLACE! IT'S RIGHT ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE GAMBLING CASINO, RIGHT IN THE CENTER OF TOWN!
IF I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO COME HYAR, HOW DO I COLLECT AFTER I KILL HIM?
THE DAY AFTER I HEAR THAT PRESSTON IS DEAD, EITHER I OR MY HELPER WILL MEET YUH IN THE LOBBY OF THE OPERA HOUSE DURING INTERMISSION AND SLIP THE MONEY TO YUH!
NO DICE, HADDEES! AFTER I KNOCK OFF PRESSTON, WHAT GUARANTEE WILL I HAVE THAT YUH'LL PAY ME AT ALL? I COULDN'T GO TO THE SHERIFF AND ASK HIM TO HELP ME COLLECT A BAD DEBT! AND EVEN KILLING YUH FER NONPAYMENT WOULDN'T LINE MY POCKET WITH THAT SWEET-LOOKING GREEN STUFF!

SEEING PRESSTON DEAD IS WORTH FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS TO ME, BUT IF YO'RE AFRAID OF A DOUBLE CROSS, I'LL RIP THESE BILLS IN HALF---
--- AND GIVE YUH HALF OF THEM AND I'LL KEEP THE OTHER HALF! HOW THEY WON'T BE ANY GOOD TO EITHER OF US SO YUH KNOW I'LL TURN THE OTHER HALF OVER TO YUH WHEN THE JOB IS FINISHED!
IT'S A DEAL!
RIP!
SHORTLY AFTER...
I KNOW JUST WHAT YO'RE GOING TO TELL ME, CLEM---CUDD DIXON NEVER SHOWED UP IN THE OPRY HOUSE!
WHAT ARE YUH TALKING ABOUT, HAODEES? OF COURSE HE SHOWED UP AND I DELIVERED THE NOTE!
EXX RANCH
WHAT?
WHAT'S THE MATTER? ISN'T THAT WHAT YUH TOLD ME TO DO?
YES! BUT CUDD DIXON LOST HIS TICKET TO THE OPERA HOUSE! WHOEVER SAT IN THAT SEAT NEXT TO YORES MUST HAVE FOUND IT!
(GULP!) IF HE READS THAT NOTE, I RECKON HE'LL TAKE IT RIGHT TO THE SHERIFF!
DOUBLE XX RAN
TO MAKE MATTERS EVEN WORSE, CUDD DIXON IS ON HIS WAY TO THE GAZETTE OFFICE NOW! AND IF THAT STRANGER DID TURN THE NOTE OVER TO THE SHERIFF, THAR'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT PRESSTON'S NEWSPAPER OFFICE IS BEING GUARDED!
IF THEY CAPTURE DIXON, I RECKON HE'LL TALK AND WE'LL ALL BE DONE FER! WE'D BETTER GET OUR HORSES! MAYBE WE CAN CATCH HIM BEFORE HE REACHES TOWN!
YUH STAY HYAR, CLEM! I'LL GO! IF THAT HOMBRE YUH GAVE THE NOTE TO SHOULD SPOT YUH, HE'D POINT YUH OUT TO THE SHERIFF! YUH JUST WAIT HYAR TILL I GET BACK! DON'T MAKE A MOVE!

MEANWHILE...
IF IT WASN'T SLADE MORGAN ARRANGING MY DEATH, THEN I DON'T KNOW WHO IT COULD BE!
THINK HARD, PRESSTON! EVEN THE SMALLEST LEAD WILL BE BETTER THAN NONE!
PASTE
AT THE SAME TIME...
(GULP!) I'M TOO LATE! DIXON'S ALREADY AT THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE!
APACHE FALLS GAZETTE
OFFICE
LOOK, A STRANGER'S COMING IN, LASH!
I'LL HIDE BEHIND THIS TABLE UNTIL YOU SEE WHO IT IS! IF IT SHOULD BE THE KILLER, I'LL BE ABLE TO CATCH HIM OFF GUARD!
YES, SIR?
I'VE GOT A GUN UNDER THIS TEN-GALLON HAT AND IT'S AIMED STRAIGHT AT YUH! NOW HEAD FER THE BACK OF THE STORE!
WHAT IS THIS --- A ROBBERY?
IT'S MURDER! NOW GET GOING AS I DON'T AIM TO FILL YUH FULL OF LEAD RIGHT OUT HYAR IN FRONT WHAR EVERYBODY CAN LOOK THROUGH THE WINDOW AND SEE ME!
I RECKON YOU'RE NOT MURDERING ANYONE AROUND HERE! NOW PUT YOUR HANDS UP!
(GULP!) HE MUST BE A LAWMAN!
GOOD SHOOTING, LASH! YOU SHOT THE GUN RIGHT OUT OF HIS HAND!
BANG!
WELL, HE'S NOT TAKING ME IN! AND THIS TRAY OF TYPE SHOULD SEE TO THAT!
WHAM!

I CAN'T SEE!
THAT'S WHAT I WAS HOPING FER! IT'LL GIVE ME A CHANCE TO GET OUT OF HYAR!

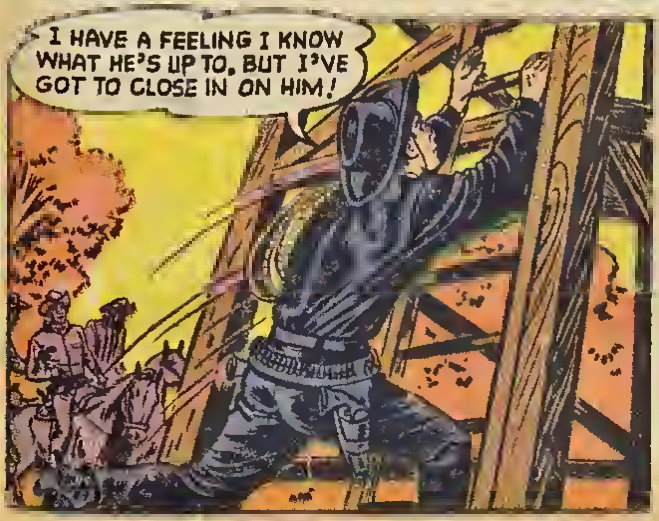
WITH STINGING EYES, LASH MAKES HIS WAY TO THE DOOR!
THERE HE GOES!

LET'S GO, RUSH! WE'VE GOT TO CATCH THAT HOMBRE! IF HE GETS AWAY, SO DOES OUR CHANCE OF CLEARING UP THIS MYSTERY!

SHORTLY AFTER...
THAT LAWMAN'S HORSE IS TOO FAST! HE'LL CATCH UP TO ME IN ANOTHER FEW SECONDS!

IF I CLIMB TO THE TOP OF THIS WATER TANK, MAYBE I CAN GIVE HIM THE SLIP!

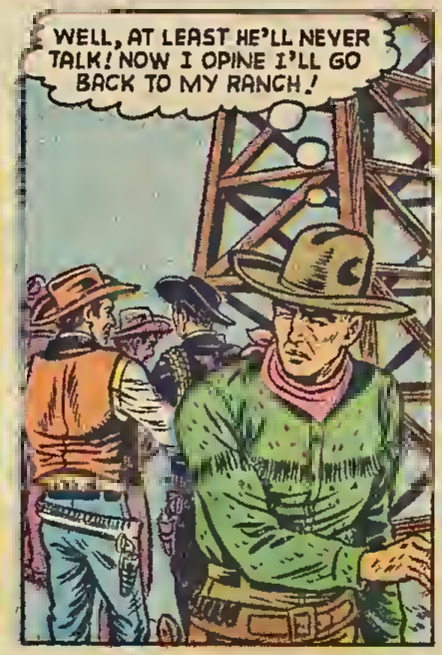
IF HE TRIES TO COME AFTER ME, A GOOD HARD KICK WILL SEND HIM FLYING!


I HAVE A FEELING I KNOW WHAT HE'S UP TO, BUT I'VE GOT TO CLOSE IN ON HIM!

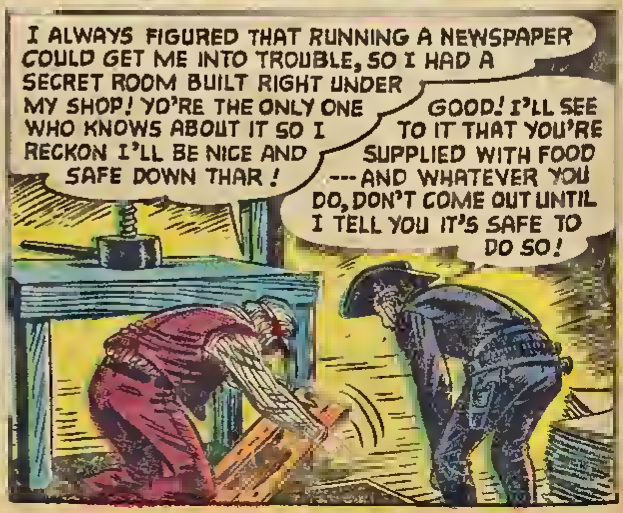
HE'S COMING UP! WELL, A FALL FROM UP HYAR WILL SURELY BREAK HIS NECK!

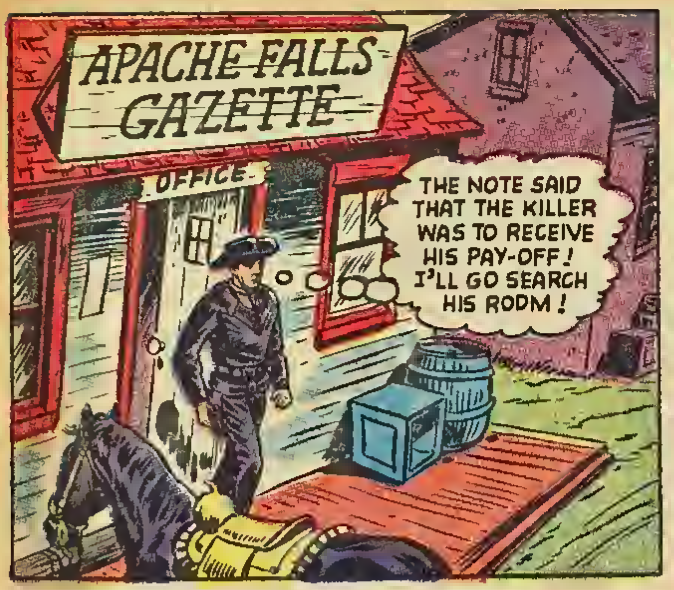
BUT AS CUDD STEPS TOWARDS THE EDGE TO CARRY OUT HIS PLAN...

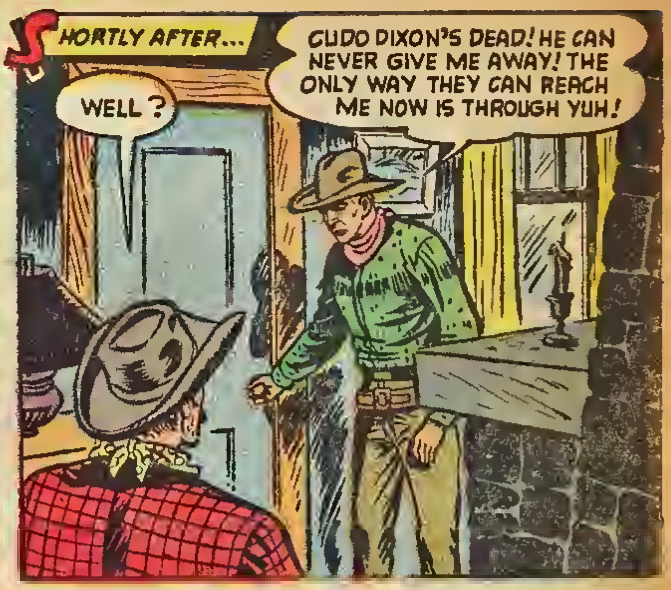
BUT BY THE TIME THE ROVING MARSHAL CLIMBS DOWN, IT'S TOO LATE FOR HELP!



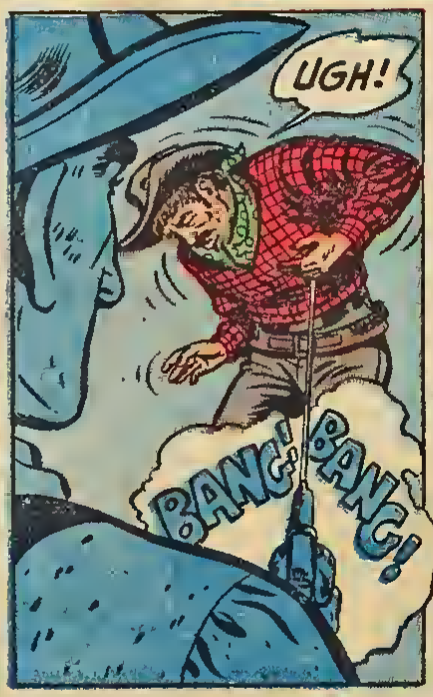
BACK AT THE OFFICE OF THE APACHE FALLS GAZETTE...



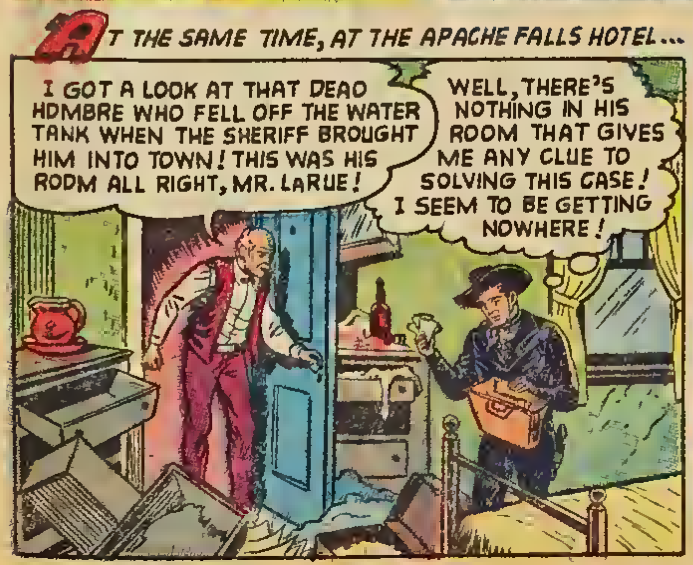

APACHE FALLS GAZETTE
OFFICE
THE NOTE SAID THAT THE KILLER WAS TO RECEIVE HIS PAY-OFF! I'LL GO SEARCH HIS ROOM!

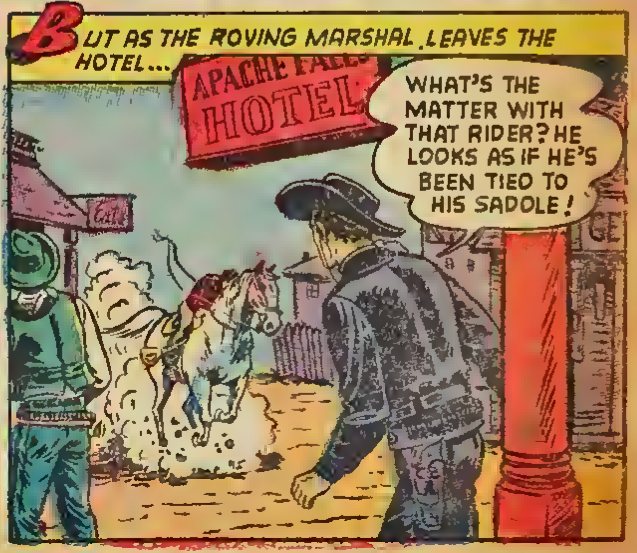

SHORTLY AFTER...
WELL?
GUIDO DIXON'S DEAD! HE CAN NEVER GIVE ME AWAY! THE ONLY WAY THEY CAN REACH ME NOW IS THROUGH YUH!

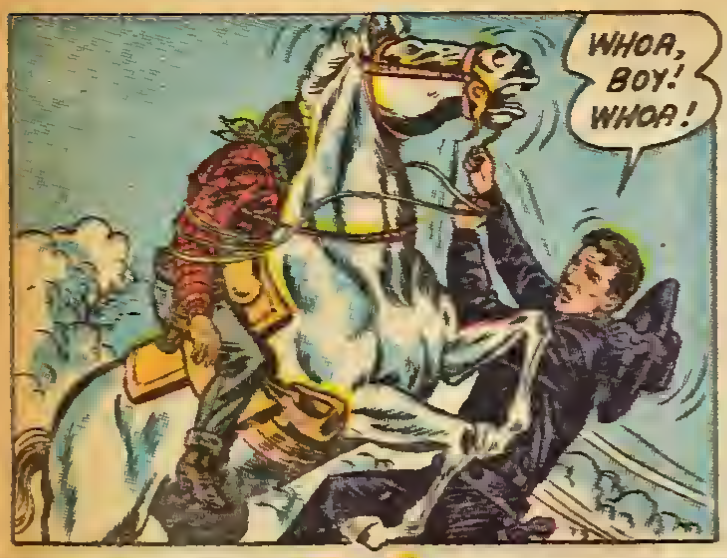
YUH KNOW I'D NEVER TALK, HADDEES! YUH KNOW THAT, DON'T YUH?
I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE, GLEM!


UGH!
BANG! BANG!

NOW I'LL JUST TIE YUH TO YORE SADDLE, AND HEAD YORE HORSE TOWARDS TOWN! IF THAT STRANGER YUH GAVE THAT NOTE TO SHOULD HAPPEN TO RECOGNIZE YUH, THE SHERIFF WILL REALIZE THAR'S NO ONE LEFT TO REVEAL MY IDENTITY AND MAYBE HE'LL FORGET ABOUT THIS CASE!


AT THE SAME TIME, AT THE APACHE FALLS HOTEL...
I GOT A LOOK AT THAT DEAD HOMBRE WHO FELL OFF THE WATER TANK WHEN THE SHERIFF BROUGHT HIM INTO TOWN! THIS WAS HIS ROOM ALL RIGHT, MR. LARUE!
WELL, THERE'S NOTHING IN HIS ROOM THAT GIVES ME ANY CLUE TO SOLVING THIS CASE! I SEEM TO BE GETTING NOWHERE!


BUT AS THE ROVING MARSHAL LEAVES THE HOTEL...
APACHE FALLS HOTEL
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THAT RIDER? HE LOOKS AS IF HE'S BEEN TIED TO HIS SADDLE!

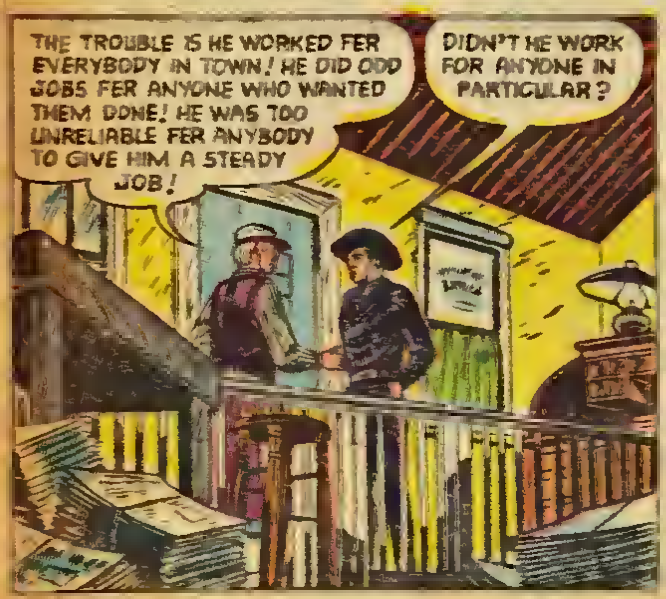

WHOA, BOY! WHOA!

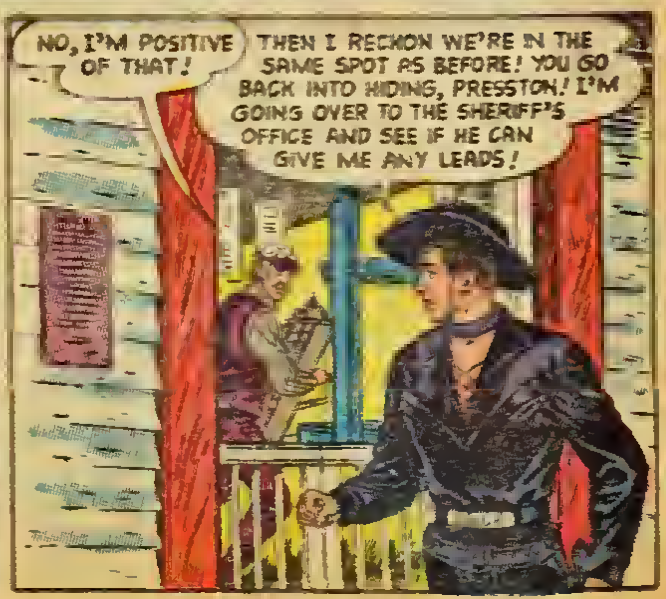
THIS HOMBRE'S BEEN PLUGGED FULL OF LEAD!

IT'S THE VARMINT WHO SLIPPED THE NOTE TO ME IN THE OPERA HOUSE! I'VE GOT TO GET HIM OVER TO THE GAZETTE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY!

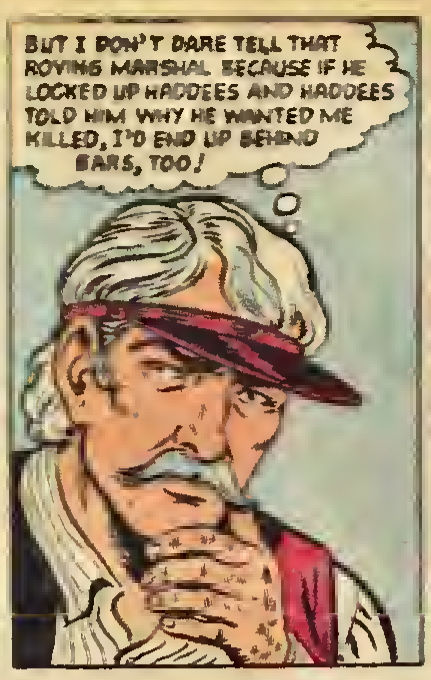
SHORTLY AFTER...
I THOUGHT YUH WANTED ME TO STAY BELOW UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, LASH!
THAT'S RIGHT, PRESSTON, BUT MAYBE IT WON'T BE NECESSARY ANY LONGER — IF YOU CAN IDENTIFY THE BODY I'VE GOT OUTSIDE!

I SURE CAN IDENTIFY HIM, LASH! IT'S CLEM HOPPER!
THEN ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TELL ME WHO HE WORKS FOR AND WE'VE PROBABLY GOT THE VARMINT WHO'S BEHIND THIS PLAN TO KILL YOU!
APACHE FALLS GAZETTE


THE TROUBLE IS HE WORKED FER EVERYBODY IN TOWN! HE DID ODD JOBS FER ANYONE WHO WANTED THEM DONE! HE WAS TOO UNRELIABLE FER ANYBODY TO GIVE HIM A STEADY JOB!
DIDN'T HE WORK FOR ANYONE IN PARTICULAR?


NO, I'M POSITIVE OF THAT!
THEN I RECKON WE'RE IN THE SAME SPOT AS BEFORE! YOU GO BACK INTO HIDING, PRESSTON! I'M GOING OVER TO THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE AND SEE IF HE CAN GIVE ME ANY LEADS!

I KNOW WHO'S TRYING TO KILL ME---HADDEES!

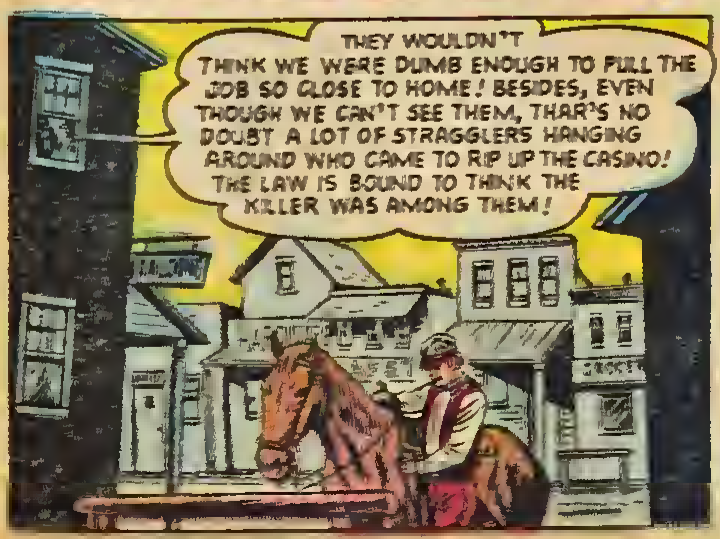

BUT I DON'T DARE TELL THAT ROVING MARSHAL BECAUSE IF HE LOCKED UP HADDEES AND HADDEES TOLD HIM WHY HE WANTED ME KILLED, I'D END UP BEHIND BARS, TOO!

I OPINE I'LL HAVE TO GO OUT TO THE DOUBLE XX RANCH AND TAKE CARE OF HADDEES BEFORE HE TAKES CARE OF ME!

BUT AS PRESSTON LEAVES HIS OFFICE---
LOOK, SLADE! PRESSTON'S COMING OUT OF HIS NEWSPAPER SHOP!
WHAT ABOUT IT, BUCK?

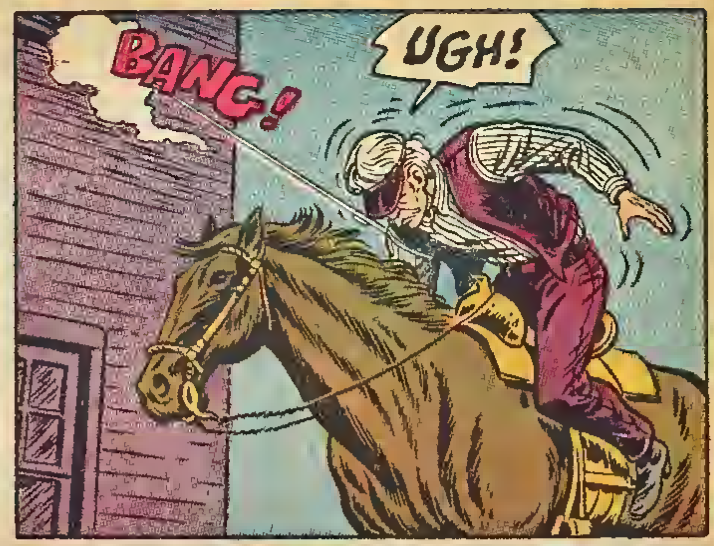
HYAR'S OUR CHANCE TO KILL HIM AND GET AWAY WITH IT!
YEAH? HOW?

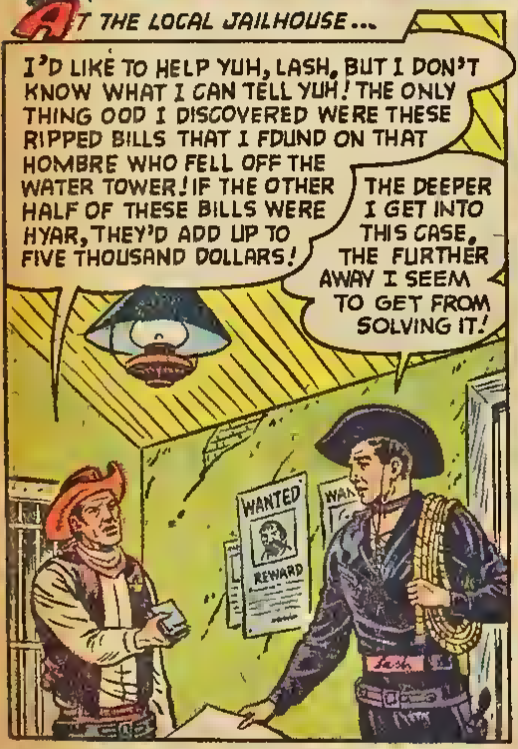
WE COULD SHOOT HIM FROM RIGHT HYAR AND SINCE THE LAW KNOWS THAT SOMEONE BESIDES YUH IS OUT TO GET HIM, THEY'LL NEVER SUSPECT US!
BUT IT'S TOO CLOSE TO THE GAMBLING CASINO!


THEY WOULDN'T THINK WE WERE DUMB ENOUGH TO PULL THE JOB SO CLOSE TO HOME! BESIDES, EVEN THOUGH WE CAN'T SEE THEM, THAR'S NO DOUBT A LOT OF STRAGGLERS HANGING AROUND WHO CAME TO RIP UP THE CASINO! THE LAW IS BOUND TO THINK THE KILLER WAS AMONG THEM!

YO'RE JUST IN TIME, TAD! YO'RE THE BEST SHOT! COME OVER HYAR AND WE'LL SHOW YUH WHAT YUH'VE GOT TO DO!

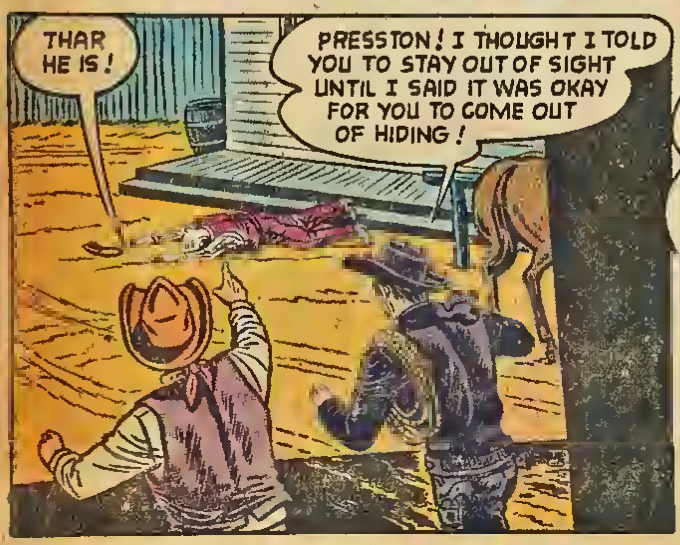
MAKE SURE YUH DON'T MISS!
MISS? FROM HYAR I COULDN'T MISS HIM BLINDFOLDED!
HARDWARE

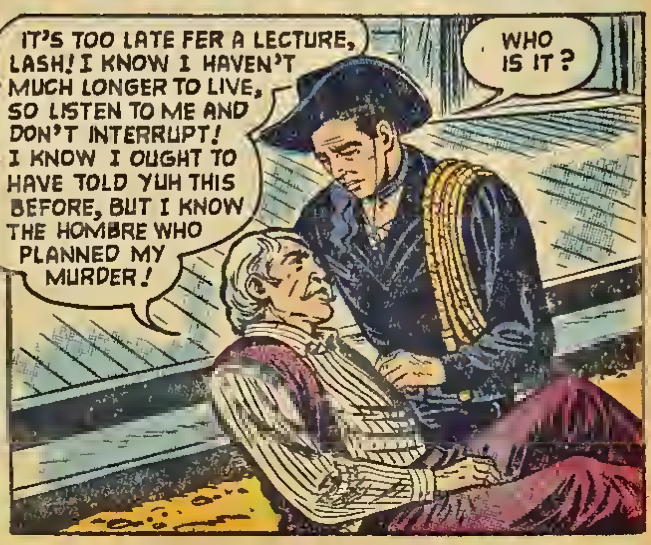

BANG!
UGH!


AT THE LOCAL JAILHOUSE...
I'D LIKE TO HELP YUH, LASH, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT I CAN TELL YUH! THE ONLY THING OOD I DISCOVERED WERE THESE RIPPED BILLS THAT I FOUND ON THAT HOMBRE WHO FELL OFF THE WATER TOWER! IF THE OTHER HALF OF THESE BILLS WERE HYAR, THEY'D ADD UP TO FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS!
THE DEEPER I GET INTO THIS CASE, THE FURTHER AWAY I SEEM TO GET FROM SOLVING IT!
WANTED
REWARD

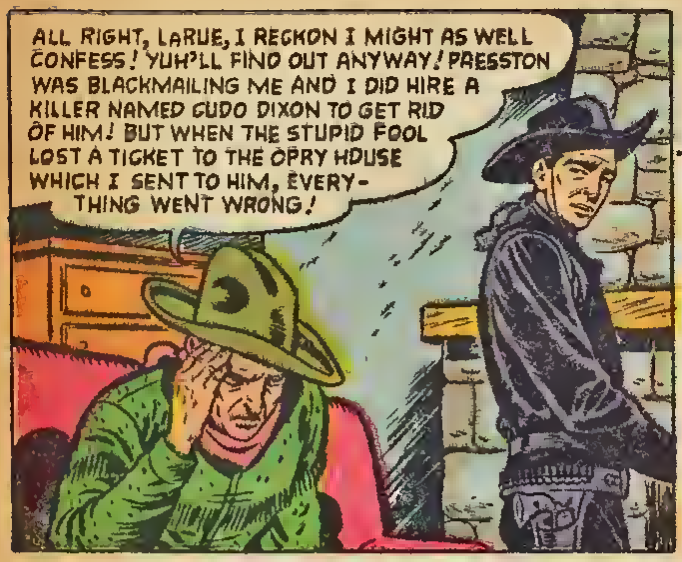
SHERIFF! COME QUICK! SOMEONE JUST SHOT THE NEWSPAPER MAN!
BARD PRESSTON?

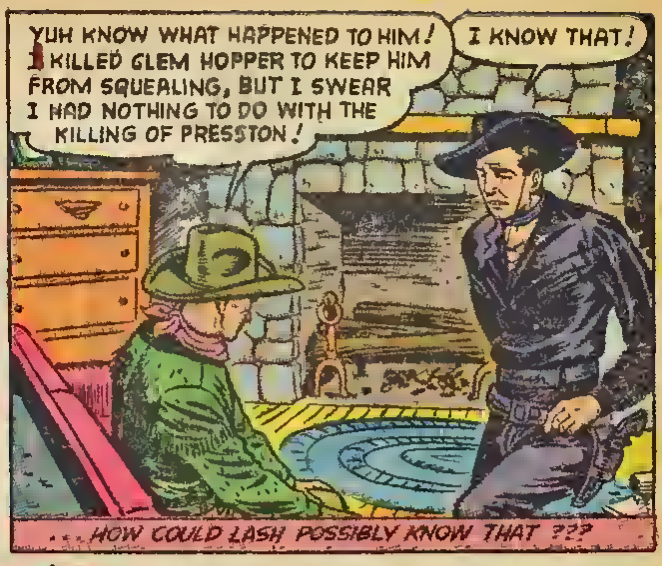
THAT'S RIGHT! HE'S LYING RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIS NEWSPAPER OFFICE! HE'S STILL ALIVE, BUT IF YUH ASK ME HE'S GOING FAST!
JAIL
GO FER THE DOCTOR!


THAR HE IS!
PRESSTON! I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO STAY OUT OF SIGHT UNTIL I SAID IT WAS OKAY FOR YOU TO COME OUT OF HIDING!


IT'S TOO LATE FER A LECTURE, LASH! I KNOW I HAVEN'T MUCH LONGER TO LIVE, SO LISTEN TO ME AND DON'T INTERRUPT! I KNOW I OUGHT TO HAVE TOLD YUH THIS BEFORE, BUT I KNOW THE HOMBRE WHO PLANNED MY MURDER!
WHO IS IT?

HADDEES! TOM HADDEES, THE OWNER OF THE DOUBLE XX RANCH! WHEN I OPENED UP MY PAPER HYAR I DISCOVERED PROOF THAT HE HAD ROBBED THE BANK AT TULSA TEN YEARS AGO, AND I'VE BEEN BLACKMAILING HIM EVER SINCE!
YOU KNEW THIS RIGHT FROM THE START AND YOU DION'T TELL ME?
I FIGURED (GROAN) THAT IF I PLAYED IT MY WAY I WOULDN'T END UP IN THE HOOSEGOW, AND I RECKON I WAS RIGHT! I'M NOT GOING TO END UP IN THE HOOSEGOW--- JUST IN A PINE BOX!
I'VE GOT NO SYMPATHY WITH BLACKMAILERS, PRESSTON, BUT I DON'T LIKE TO SEE ANYONE DIE! MAYBE THE DOCTOR WILL BE ABLE TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOU!
WHEN THE DOCTOR GETS HERE, SHERIFF, YOU CAN SAVE HIM SOME TIME IF YOU TELL HIM THAT THE BULLET SEEMS TO HAVE GONE THROUGH PRESSTON'S NECK AT AN ANGLE OF ABOUT 75 DEGREES! MEANWHILE, I'M RIDING OUT TO THE DOUBLE XX RANCH!
GAZETTE
BARD PRESSTON EDITOR AND PUBLISHER
SHORTLY AFTER...
THAT WAS A MIGHTY INTERESTING STORY YUH TOLD ME, MARSHAL, BUT IF I DENY IT, AND I DO, HOW COULD YUH POSSIBLY PROVE I HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH SENDING FER THAT OUT-OF-TOWN KILLER?
JUST EMPTY YOUR POCKETS ONTO THAT TABLE, HADDEES!
WHAT FER?
JUST DO AS I SAY AND YOU'LL SAVE ME THE BOTHER OF MAKING YOU DO IT!
JUST AS YUH SAY, MARSHAL!
THIS IS WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR! THESE BILLS RIPPED IN HALF ARE ALL THE PROOF I NEED!
WHAT ARE YUH TALKING ABOUT?
THEY MATCH UP PERFECTLY WITH THESE OTHER RIPPED BILLS WHICH THE SHERIFF FOUND IN THE HIRED KILLER'S POCKET! IF YOU WEREN'T TIED UP WITH HIM, HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR HAVING HALF THE BILLS AND HIS HAVING THE OTHER HALF?

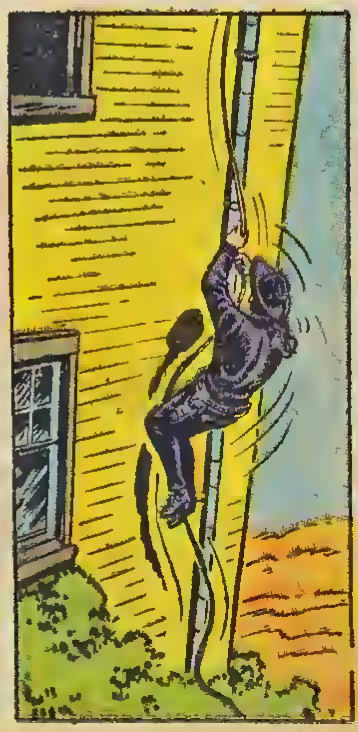

ALL RIGHT, LARUE, I RECKON I MIGHT AS WELL CONFESS! YUH'LL FIND OUT ANYWAY! PRESSTON WAS BLACKMAILING ME AND I DID HIRE A KILLER NAMED GUDO DIXON TO GET RID OF HIM! BUT WHEN THE STUPID FOOL LOST A TICKET TO THE OPRY HOUSE WHICH I SENT TO HIM, EVERY-THING WENT WRONG!


YUH KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM! I KILLED GLEM HOPPER TO KEEP HIM FROM SQUEALING, BUT I SWEAR I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE KILLING OF PRESSTON!
I KNOW THAT!
...HOW COULD LASH POSSIBLY KNOW THAT ???

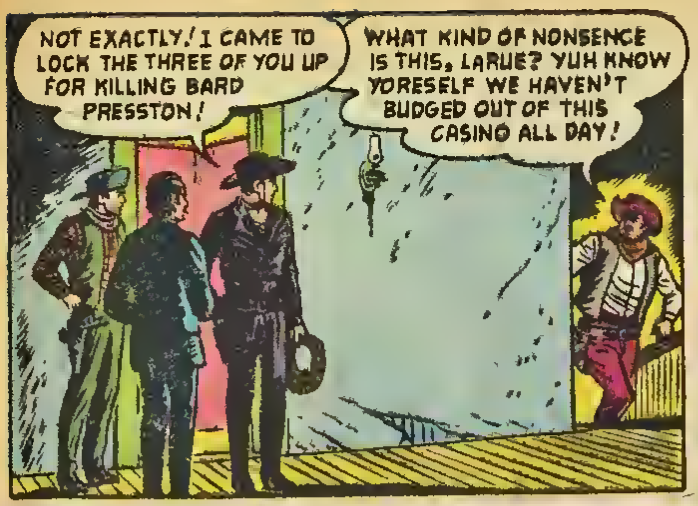
I THOUGHT I GOT AWAY WITH ROBBING THAT BANK TEN YEARS AGO, BUT THAT DEED KEPT POPPING UP AND I'VE BEEN BLACKMAILED BY SOMEBODY OR OTHER EVER SINCE! THAT MONEY BROUGHT ME NOTHING BUT MISERY!
THAT'S THE PRICE OF CRIME, HADDEES! NOW LET'S HEAD FOR TOWN!

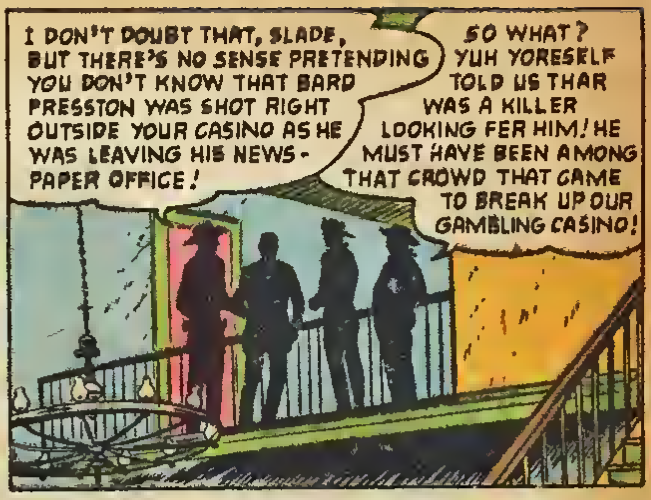
AND AFTER LASH TURNS HADDEES OVER TO THE SHERIFF...
THAR WAS NOTHING THE DOCTOR COULD DO FER PRESSTON, LASH! HE DIED A FEW MINUTES AFTER YUH LEFT! BUT IF HADDEES WASN'T RESPONSIBLE FER HIS DEATH, WHO WAS?
I'M GOING TO SEE IF I CAN SETTLE THAT BUSINESS RIGHT NOW!
WANT

BACK AT THE APACHE FALLS GAMBLING CASINO...
SNAP!
THE DOORS ARE STILL LOCKED, SO I RECKON I'LL HAVE TO USE MY PRIVATE ENTRANCE AGAIN!

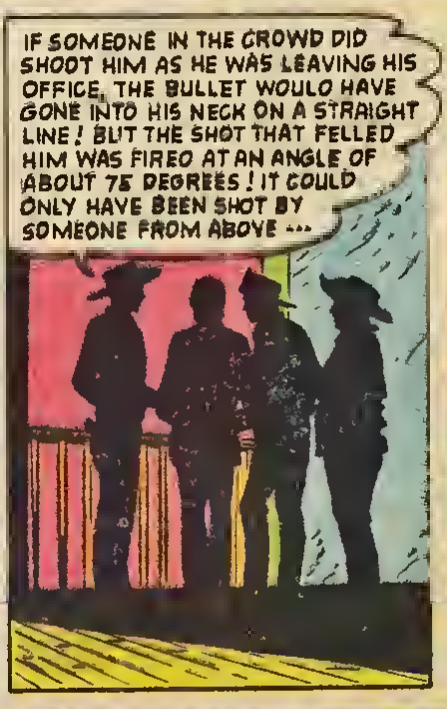


HOLD IT, TAD, IT'S THE MARSHAL AGAIN!
FER A SECOND I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE HIM! DID YUH COME BACK TO TELL US YUH FINALLY GOT RID OF THAT CROWD WHO WANTED TO RIP UP OUR JOINT?


NOT EXACTLY! I CAME TO LOCK THE THREE OF YOU UP FOR KILLING BARD PRESSTON!
WHAT KIND OF NONSENCE IS THIS, LARUE? YUH KNOW YORESELF WE HAVEN'T BUDGED OUT OF THIS CASINO ALL DAY!


I DON'T DOUBT THAT, SLADE, BUT THERE'S NO SENSE PRETENDING YOU DON'T KNOW THAT BARD PRESSTON WAS SHOT RIGHT OUTSIDE YOUR CASINO AS HE WAS LEAVING HIS NEWSPAPER OFFICE!
SO WHAT? YUH YORESELF TOLD US THAR WAS A KILLER LOOKING FER HIM! HE MUST HAVE BEEN AMONG THAT CROWD THAT CAME TO BREAK UP OUR GAMBLING CASINO!

THAT'S WHAT YOU WOULD LIKE ME TO THINK, BUT YOU FORGOT ONE ANGLE, AND THAT'S THE ANGLE OF THE SHOT THAT FELLED PRESSTON!


IF SOMEONE IN THE CROWD DID SHOOT HIM AS HE WAS LEAVING HIS OFFICE, THE BULLET WOULD HAVE GONE INTO HIS NECK ON A STRAIGHT LINE! BUT THE SHOT THAT FELLED HIM WAS FIRED AT AN ANGLE OF ABOUT 75 DEGREES! IT COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN SHOT BY SOMEONE FROM ABOVE ...

--- AND IF YOU ASK ME, I'D SAY IT WAS SHOT FROM THAT VERY WINDOW!
WHAT YUH SAY DOESN'T COUNT! YUH NEED PROOF!

I'LL GET ALL THE PROOF I NEED WHEN WE CHECK THE BULLET THAT KILLED PRESSTON WITH THOSE IN YOUR SIX-SHOOTERS! NOW TURN THEM OVER!
IF YUH WANT MY SIX-SHOOTER, LAWDOG, YUH'LL HAVE TO TAKE IT FROM ME!

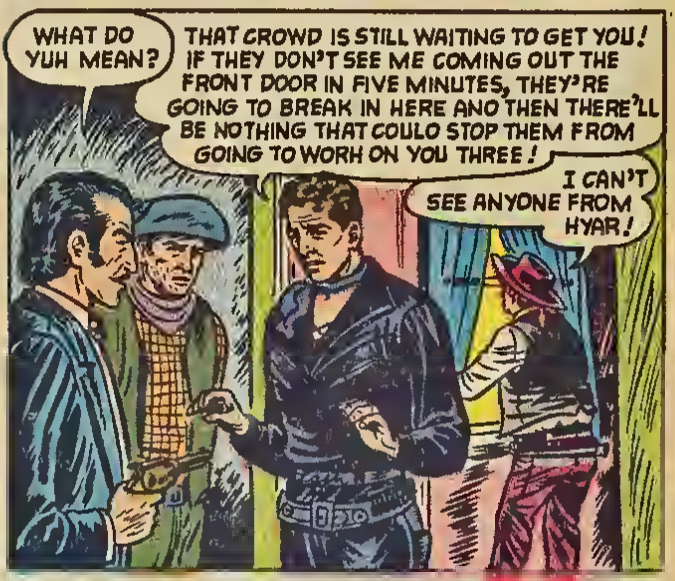
THAR'S NO SENSE IN FIGHTING, MEN! HE'S GOT THE DROP ON US! NOW DO AS HE SAYS! TURN OVER YORE GUNS TO HIM! HYAR'S MINE, LARUE!

BUT AS LASH REACHES FOR SLADE MORGAN'S BLACK-EYED SUSAN...
SMACK!

AND BEFORE THE KING OF THE BULLWHIP CAN REGAIN HIS BALANCE...
THAT'S IT! DISARM HIM!

I RECKON I'LL DO THE ORDERING AROUND HYAR NOW!
I DON'T THINK SO!

YUH'D BETTER TALK CIVIL, LARUE! YORE LIFE DEPENDS ON IT!
TO THE CONTRARY, YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON ME!

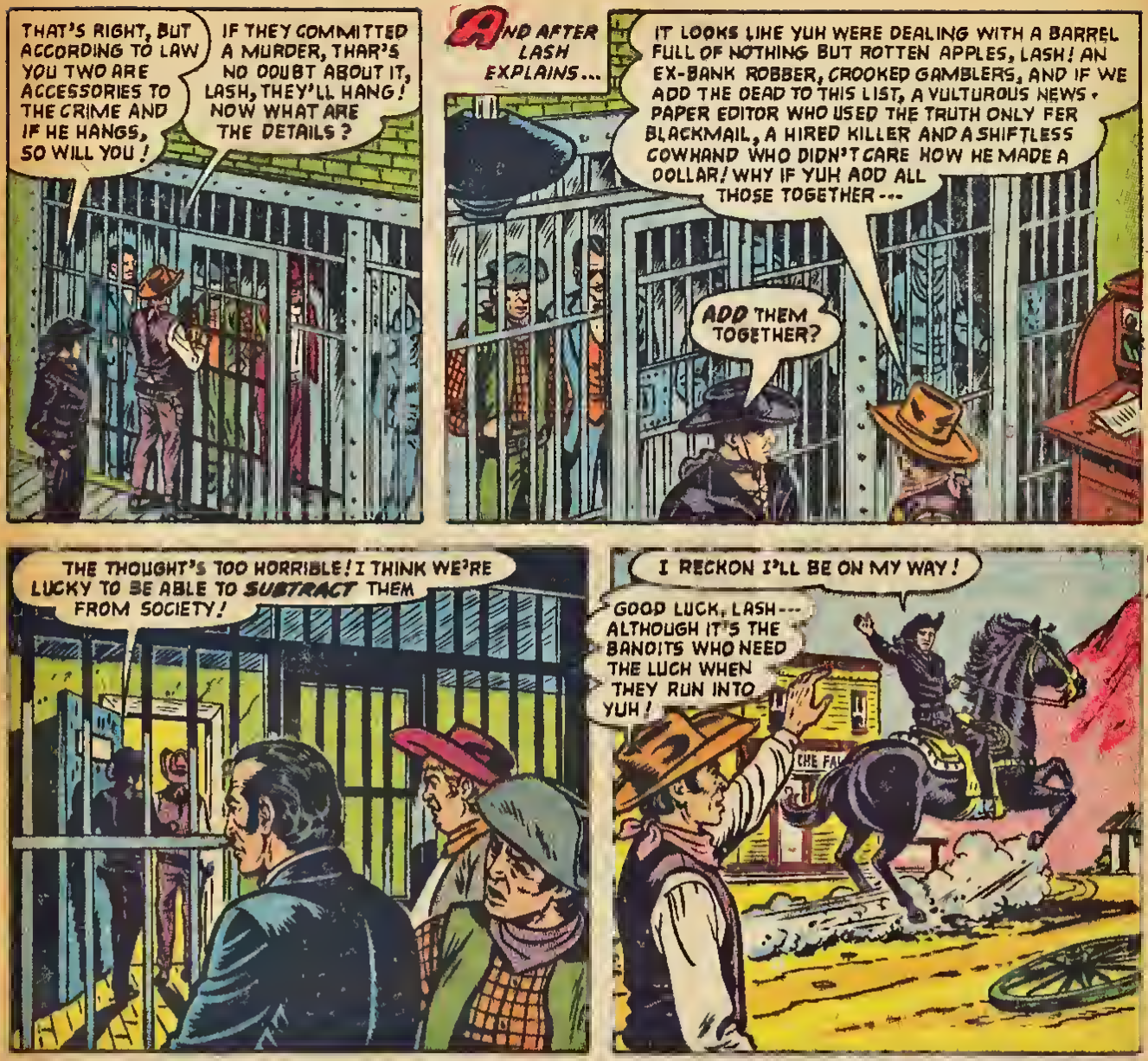

WHAT DO YUH MEAN?
THAT CROWD IS STILL WAITING TO GET YOU! IF THEY DON'T SEE ME COMING OUT THE FRONT DOOR IN FIVE MINUTES, THEY'RE GOING TO BREAK IN HERE AND THEN THERE'LL BE NOTHING THAT COULD STOP THEM FROM GOING TO WORK ON YOU THREE!
I CAN'T SEE ANYONE FROM HYAR!

OF COURSE NOT! THEY'RE HIDING AT THE SIDE OF THE GAMBLING CASINO LIKE I TOLD THEM TO DO!
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO, SLADE?

BY NOW THAT MOB MUST BE SO MAD THEY'LL TEAR US APART!
I RECKON WE'LL HAVE TO USE LARUE AS A HOSTAGE TO GET US OUT OF HYAR ALIVE! GOING TO JAIL IS BETTER THAN BEING KILLED BY THAT BLOODTHIRSTY MOB!

WHAT'S THE GOOD OF GOING TO JAIL! WE'RE WANTED FER MURDER! THEY'LL HANG US ANYWAY!
OH, NO, THEY WON'T! AFTER ALL, ONLY TAD DID THE ACTUAL FIRING OF THE GUN! HE'S THE ONE THEY'LL HANG!

LOOK HYAR, NOBODY'S GOING TO MAKE ME THE FALL GUY IN THIS SETUP! IF I'M THE ONLY GUY WHO'S GOING TO SWING BY GOING TO JAIL, THEN ALL OF US ARE GOING TO FIND SOME WAY TO GET OUT OF HYAR WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE MARSHAL!
BUT THE EVER-ALERT LASH GRASPS EVEN THE SLIGHTEST OPPORTUNITY, AND ...
IF YOU WANT ME TO GET YOU OUT OF HERE ALIVE THROUGH THAT MOB, YOU CAN DO IT NOW! TAD WON'T STOP YOU!
WE'D BETTER DO AS HE SAYS, BUCK! HAND OUR GUNS OVER TO HIM!
WHAM!
REMEMBER, WE SURRENDERED! NOW IT'S UP TO YUH TO GET US THROUGH THAT MOB SAFELY!
AND AS LASH LARUE LEADS THE UNSCRUPULOUS GAMBLERS OUT OF THE CASINO ...
(GULP!) THAR'S NO ONE HYAR! HE JUST PULLED A BLUFF AND WE FELL FER IT!
IF YUH TWO WEREN'T SO YELLOW, WE WOULD HAVE BEEN ON OUR WAY OUT OF HYAR BY NOW!
KEEP WALKING! I RECKON YOU ALL KNOW THE WAY TO THE JAILHOUSE!
CASINO
EAT
JAIL
SHERIFF'S OFFICE
COFFIN MAKER
SHORTLY AFTER...
JUMPING JEHOSHAPHAT! YO'RE SURE KEEPING ME BUSY, LASH! WHAT ARE YUH BRINGING THESE THREE IN FER --- CROOKED GAMBLING?
NO DOUBT WE COULD PROVE THAT IF WE WANTED TO, SHERIFF, BUT I DON'T THINK IT WILL BE NECESSARY! I WANT YOU TO BOOK THESE THREE ON A CHARGE OF MURDER!
JAIL
WANTED
$500 REWARD
BUT ONLY TWO DID THE SHOOTING, LARUE!
YUH HEARD HIM, MARSHAL! HE CONFESSED IT!
TED



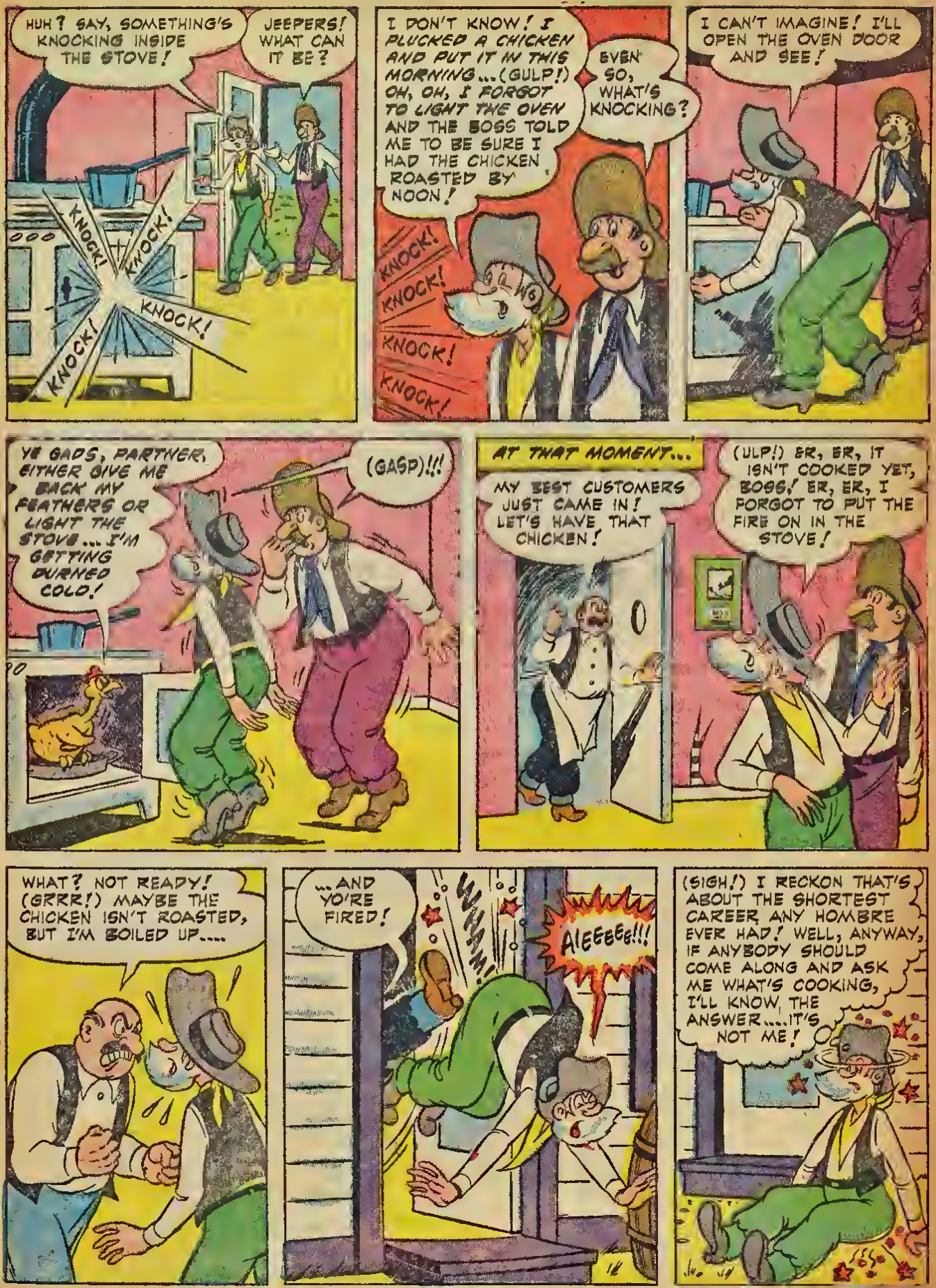
LAUGH YOUR HEAD OFF!
Read
FUNNY ANIMALS
HA HA HA HA HA HA
FUNNY ANIMALS
ONE THIN DIME 10¢ ON ANY NEWSSTAND

TRADER TOM
"A WONDERFUL GADGET!"
I'VE BEEN TROUBLED WITH MICE IN MY HOUSE LATELY, TRADER TOM.
YOUR TROUBLES ARE OVER!
TRADER TOM'S MOUSE TRAPS $1.00 each
BUY ONE OF MY SPECIAL TRADER TOM MOUSE TRAPS! THEY'RE WONDERFUL FOR MICE!
REALLY? IN THAT CASE I'LL TAKE ONE!
A FEW DAYS LATER--
(GRRRR!) YUH CROOK! I WANT MY MONEY BACK! YORE MOUSE TRAP IS NO GOOD.
TRADER TOM'S GENERAL STORE
NO GOOD?
THAT'S RIGHT! YUH SAID IT WAS WONDERFUL FER MICE AND IT DIDN'T CATCH A SINGLE MOUSE IN ALL THE DAYS I'VE HAD IT!
WELL--
--ISN'T THAT WONDERFUL FOR THE MICE?
GASP!!
WAGON WHEELS
--- A HARD-HEARTED FELLOW!
HOWDY, WAGON WHEELS! YUH USED TO WORK FER HUCK FLINT, DIDN'T YUH?
THAT'S RIGHT!
IS HE REALLY AS MEAN AS EVERYONE SAYS?
HE SURE IS! HE'S THE MEANEST AND HARDEST-HEARTED HOMBRE IN THE WORLD!
IS THAT SO?
THAT'S RIGHT! WHY, HE'S SO HARD-HEARTED THAT ONE NIGHT HE ATE HIS HEART OUT---
--- AND HE BROKE A TOOTH!
(GASP)!!!

DUSTY
THE CHIEF CHEF!
H'YA, DUSTY I HEAR TELL YO'RE THE NEW CHEF IN THE GOPHER HOLE RESTAURANT!
THAT'S RIGHT! I GOT THE JOB YESTERDAY AND I SURE AM GOING TO WORK HARD AT IT! I INTEND TO MAKE IT MY CAREER!
GOPHER HOLE RESTAURANT
CAREER, EH? I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW YUH COULD COOK!
SHUCKS, THAR'S NOTHING TO IT! ALL YUH NEED TO GET ALONG IS A CHICKEN AND A GOOD COOK BOOK!
IS THAT SO?
YUP! THE CHICKEN MAY BE A LITTLE TOUGH....
...BUT THE COOK BOOK COMES OUT DELICIOUS!
(GASP)!!!
HOWEVER...THE COVER IS A LITTLE BINDING! HA, HA!
(GASP)!!!

JEEPERS! I'D BE AFEARED TO EAT IN A RESTAURANT WHAR YUH MADE THE MEALS!
OH, YEAH! YUH'D HAVE BEEN WORSE OFF IF YUH ATE THAR BEFORE THEY HIRED ME!
HOW COME?
THEY HAD A WOMAN COOK THAR!
WHAT ABOUT IT?
SHE USED TO DRESS TO KILL.....
GOP RES
...AND SHE COOKED THE SAME WAY!
(GASP)!!!
WHY AREN'T YUH ON THE JOB NOW?
OH, I JUST WENT OUT FER LUNCH!
(GASP!) WHAT? YUH DON'T EAT IN YORE OWN RESTAURANT?
NO! AT LEAST NOT UNTIL TOMORROW!
WHY NOT UNTIL TOMORROW?
I JUST TOOK OUT AN INSURANCE POLICY...

...AND IT WON'T GO INTO EFFECT UNTIL THEN!
(GASP)!!!
GOSH! THE FOOD SURE MUST BE TERRIBLE!
NAW! I'M JUST KIDDING! AS A MATTER OF FACT, IT'S GREAT!
IT IS?
YUP! YUH HAVEN'T LIVED TILL YUH EAT HYAR...
...AND IF YUH LIVE AFTER YUH EAT HYAR, IT'S A MIRACLE!
(GASP)!!!
WELL, THANKS FER TIPPING ME OFF! THIS IS ONE PLACE I'LL NEVER GO IN!
IT'S NOT REALLY BAD! ANYWAY, I HAVE TO GET BACK TO WORK!
WHAR ARE YUH GOING, DUSTY?
THE KITCHEN HAS AN ENTRANCE AT THE REAR!
OH, YEAH? LET ME SEE WHAT THE PLACE LOOKS LIKE!
SURE! COME IN! YUH CAN KEEP ME COMPANY!


HUH? SAY, SOMETHING'S KNOCKING INSIDE THE STOVE!
JEEPERS! WHAT CAN IT BE?
KNOCK!
KNOCK!
KNOCK!
KNOCK!
I DON'T KNOW! I PLUCKED A CHICKEN AND PUT IT IN THIS MORNING...(GULP!) OH, OH, I FORGOT TO LIGHT THE OVEN AND THE BOSS TOLD ME TO BE SURE I HAD THE CHICKEN ROASTED BY NOON!
EVEN SO, WHAT'S KNOCKING?
KNOCK!
KNOCK!
KNOCK!
KNOCK!
I CAN'T IMAGINE! I'LL OPEN THE OVEN DOOR AND SEE!
YE GADS, PARTNER, EITHER GIVE ME BACK MY FEATHERS OR LIGHT THE STOVE...I'M GETTING DURNED COLD!
(GASP)!!!
AT THAT MOMENT...
MY BEST CUSTOMERS JUST CAME IN! LET'S HAVE THAT CHICKEN!
(ULP!) ER, ER, IT ISN'T COOKED YET, BOSS! ER, ER, I FORGOT TO PUT THE FIRE ON IN THE STOVE!
WHAT? NOT READY! (GRRR!) MAYBE THE CHICKEN ISN'T ROASTED, BUT I'M BOILED UP....
...AND YO'RE FIRED!
WHAM!
AIEEEEe!!!
(SIGH!) I RECKON THAT'S ABOUT THE SHORTEST CAREER ANY HOMBRE EVER HAD! WELL, ANYWAY, IF ANYBODY SHOULD COME ALONG AND ASK ME WHAT'S COOKING, I'LL KNOW THE ANSWER....IT'S NOT ME!

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SELF DEFENSE

(Continued from inside front cover)

With the last word, Dancer flipped his sheriff badge to the mayor, turned, and stalked out.

Mayor Caldwell lost no time in getting to Graham's office which he entered through a door at the rear of the Red Diamond Casino. This was a door habitually kept locked and which Graham would open only on hearing a secret code knock: Tap, tap . . . tap, tap, tap . . . tap.

He was breathless from his hurried journey and for a moment could only nod to Graham and to the Canyon Kid, a lean, angular man who lounged in the extra chair smoking a bent cigarette.

"Well, Mr. Mayor, what's up?" asked Graham, accenting the phrase "Mr. Mayor" with considerable sarcasm.

"He's quit," panted Caldwell. "Sheriff turned in his badge."

"Just as well," grunted Graham. "Never did like that hombre. He was one of those men who can't be bought or scared. You made a mistake to hire him in the first place."

"Well, we had to have somebody," whined Caldwell. "We've got to pretend to maintain law and order here or the good citizens are liable to throw me right out of office."

"That would be a great loss," sneered the Canyon Kid.

Red faced, the mayor faced the killer. "Why in blazes did you have to shoot Will Plumber in the back, you stupid fool? That was too raw for anybody to regard as self-defense."

"Will Plumber was quick on the draw," responded the Kid. "I didn't want to take a chance of getting myself killed. My orders were to gun him down and that's what I did."

"Well, you could've . . ."

"Cut it out," snapped Graham. "No reason for you two to start quarreling. Snoopy Will Plumber was finding out too much about us and we had to get rid of him. We did it! That's that! And now we have also got rid of our too noble sheriff. I say it has all worked out for the best."

A knock was heard at the door: Tap, tap . . . tap, tap, tap . . . tap.

"That's the signal. Must be one of the boys. Unlock the door, Mr. Mayor," said Graham.

Caldwell turned the key, then fell back as the door was kicked roughly open and Barney Dancer entered, a gun in each fist.

"Raise 'em!" he said, as he shouldered the door shut behind him.

The three others raised their hands. Caldwell's fingers were quivering and the Canyon Kid had turned a shade paler. Only Graham seemed calm and poised as he inquired, "Is this a stickup?"

"This is an arrest," responded Barney. He nodded toward the Kid. "Him for murder and you two as accomplices. We'll dig up some more charges against you while you're cooling your heels in Territory Prison. Luckily I played my hunch and followed the mayor here. I heard him give the code knock and it was easy for me to repeat it after I had listened at the door and got enough testimony to convict all three of you."

Mayor Caldwell's whining voice rose a little higher as he whimpered, "You can't touch me. I didn't want them to commit murder. I only wanted . . ."

"Shut up!' snapped Caldwell. "This hombre is only trying to bluff us. Remember, he's not a lawman any more. He can't arrest us."

"YOU ARE slightly wrong about that," drawled Barney Dancer. "It's true, I resigned as sheriff, but I happen to be also a United States Marshal on special assignment just to clean up this town."

"Prove it!" snarled Graham.

"I'll do that," agreed Barney. "I'll show you my badge and my papers—right after I snap the handcuffs on!"

THE END

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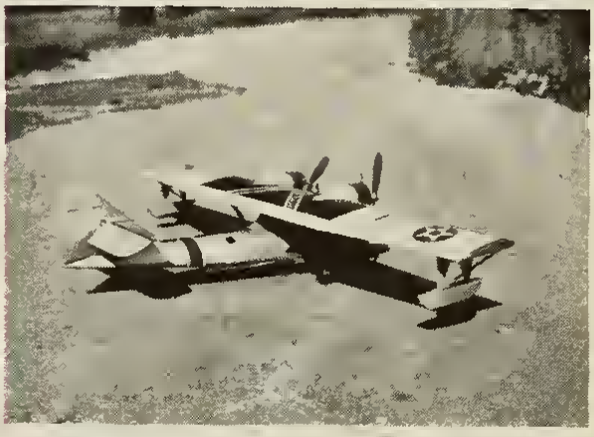

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ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

THE TEEN TITANS

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